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DG ISPR DISMISSES AFGHAN ALLEGATIONS, WARNS OF ANOTHER INDIAN FALSE FLAG OPERATION

- BRUSHES ASIDE AFGHAN ALLEGATIONS ABOUT USE OF PAKISTANI SOIL FOR US ATTACK ON AFGHANISTAN
- EXPOSES LINKS BETWEEN TERRORISM AND DRUG MONEY, WARNS OF NEW REGIONAL FAULT LINES
- SAYS 206 AFGHAN ARMY SOLDIERS WERE ALSO REPORTED KILLED DURING VARIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

ISLAMABAD
MIAN ABRAR

IN a comprehensive security briefing to senior journalists on Monday, Director-General Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry categorically denied allegations by the Afghan Taliban regime that Pakistan had permitted the United States to conduct drone strikes in Afghanistan from Pakistani territory.

"The allegation is entirely baseless," the DG ISPR asserted during the closed-door session. "Pakistan has neither allowed nor facilitated any external power, including the United States, to launch attacks on Afghanistan from its soil," he told journalists during an informal session.

Lt Gen Chaudhry stressed that there exists no operational or intelligence-sharing agreement between Islamabad and Washington that could enable such actions. His remarks came amid rising tensions between Pakistan and the Taliban-led Afghan government, which have exchanged accusations over cross-border terrorism and security breaches.

The military spokesperson also briefed journalists on Pakistan's ongoing counterterrorism efforts, the dynamics of cross-border militancy, and the intricate financial and narcotic networks sustaining regional terrorist groups.

According to Lt Gen Chaudhry, Pakistan has conducted a series of robust military operations over the past several months aimed at neutralizing militants operating along the Pak-Afghan border.

"In the past three to four months, our forces have killed 112 foreign fighters, around 60 percent of whom were Afghan nationals," he revealed.

The DG ISPR added that approximately 206 Afghan army soldiers were also reported killed during various engagements, indicating an alarming rise in cross-border involvement of Afghan combatants in militant activities against Pakistan.

He emphasized that many of these militants are being funded through the illicit narcotics trade, which continues to serve as a major source of revenue for extremist groups.

"Terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is deeply intertwined with a narco-economy," he said, explaining that Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), Frontier Corps, and other agencies have jointly intensified operations targeting drug cultivation and trafficking networks.

Lt Gen Chaudhry disclosed that around 12,000 acres of land in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remain under poppy cultivation, generating enormous profits — ranging from Rs1.8 million to Rs3.2 million per acre.

"These funds are channeled into sustaining militant networks," he warned, adding that some local political figures are complicit in this illicit enterprise.

He pointed to recent operations in the Tirah Valley, where drones and ground units of the ANF and Frontier Corps destroyed large poppy fields and dismantled processing facilities linked to terror financing. Addressing the political dimension of the Afghan conflict, Lt Gen Chaudhry criticized the Taliban regime for failing to adhere to its commitments under the 2020 Doha Agreement.

"The Taliban leadership promised a Loya Jirga and the formation of a representative government. Those promises remain unfulfilled," he noted.

He underscored that Pakistan continues to advocate a peaceful, inclusive political settlement in Afghanistan as the only viable path to regional stability.

"We prefer dialogue and peaceful coexistence," he said, "but if negotiations fail, we will consider other options to protect Pakistan's sovereignty and national interests."

The DG ISPR also accused elements within Afghanistan of providing sanctuary to militants involved in violent activities in Pakistan's Balochistan province. He alleged that Afghan-based groups have relocated fighters into densely populated areas, effectively using civilians as human shields — a tactic that complicates counterterrorism operations.

Turning to the eastern front, Lt Gen Chaudhry warned that Pakistan's intelligence agencies had detected potential signs of Indian intentions to stage a "false-flag" operation — particularly in the maritime domain — as part of a broader disinformation campaign against Pakistan.

"We suspect that India may attempt a false-flag maritime operation to fabricate a pretext for aggression and malign Pakistan internationally," he cautioned. He stated that such tactics are consistent with India's history of using disinformation to discredit Pakistan in the global arena.

The DG ISPR affirmed that Pakistan's armed forces remain on high alert to respond to any provocation or fabricated incident. "We are fully aware of India's designs and will take every necessary measure to safeguard our territorial integrity," he declared.

In concluding his remarks, Lt Gen Chaudhry reiterated that Pakistan's recent security operations — whether against cross-border militants or domestic insurgents — were purely defensive and proportionate.

IN TODAY'S ISSUE

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Pakistan winning battle of narrative with truth, facts: Tarar

ISLAMABAD
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Monday that Pakistan was winning the battle of narratives by portraying accurate and undeniable facts to the world, in the face of Indian propaganda and falsehood.

Speaking at a seminar titled Pakistan's Diplomatic Achievements: Reinvigorating Foreign Relations Through Renewed Global Engagement, organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), the minister described the launch of the Economic Strategic Framework during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to Saudi Arabia as a landmark step toward enhanced bilateral cooperation.

Tarar reaffirmed the government's commitment to engaging the global community to attract foreign investment and boost regional trade, highlighting Pakistan's strategic position as a gateway to Central Asian markets. Tarar emphasized the government's proactive diplomatic outreach. He credited Pakistan's extensive efforts for the international support received during the recent standoff with India, underscoring the nation's growing global goodwill.

With renewed diplomatic vigor and strategic economic initiatives, Pakistan aims to solidify its role as a regional trade hub and a reliable partner in global investment, he added. Tarar highlighted the strategic importance of Pakistan's ports in facilitating trade with Central Asian nations and stressed the need to deepen economic ties with friendly countries.

"Pakistan is focused on unlocking new milestones in economic development," he said, adding that fostering a more investor-friendly climate remained a top priority.

CCP EXPOSES DEEP STRUCTURAL FLAWS, TAX EVASION, AND POLICY GAPS IN PAKISTAN'S STEEL INDUSTRY

ISLAMABAD
GHULAM ABBAS

COUNTRY TRAILS REGIONAL PEERS DUE TO FRAGMENTED GOVERNANCE AND LACK OF UNIFIED NATIONAL STEEL POLICY; COMMISSION URGES URGENT REFORMS AND CREATION OF DEDICATED MINISTRY OF STEEL TO FIX STRUCTURAL DISTORTIONS

THE Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has warned that Pakistan's steel industry is riddled with systemic inefficiencies, widespread tax evasion, cartel-like market behavior, and weak regulatory oversight, calling for urgent policy reforms and the creation of a dedicated Ministry of Steel to address structural distortions.

In its newly released "Competition Assessment Study of the Steel Sector in Pakistan", the CCP painted a troubling picture of one of the country's most critical industrial sectors, which contributes nearly 1.4% to GDP and employs over half a million people but remains heavily undocumented, import-dependent, and policy-fragmented.

The report underlined that despite Pakistan's total steel production reaching 8.4 million metric tons (MT) in FY24, including 4.9 million MT of long steel and 3.5 million MT of flat steel, the country's per capita steel consumption is just 47 kilograms far below regional peers, indicating sluggish industrial and infrastructure growth.

According to the report, the manufacturing sector contributes about 71% of total exports and employs roughly 15% of the national workforce, with steel forming a vital component of the value chain. However, years of inconsistent regulation, weak enforcement, and fragmented policymaking have stunted the sector's growth. The CCP observed that substandard steel constitutes nearly 60% of domestic output, largely due to weak implementation by relevant authorities and an ineffective standards regime.

The report noted that Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM), once a strategic national asset with an annual capacity of 1.1 million tons, has been non-operational since 2015, burdened with Rs 400 billion in liabilities. Its collapse has left the market reliant on private units and steel scrap imports, which stood at 2.7 million MT in FY24 — exposing local prices to global fluctuations and foreign exchange shocks.

A major source of distortion, according to CCP, is the misuse of tax exemptions granted to industrial units in the former FATA/PATA regions, which has resulted in nearly 1.5 million tons of untaxed steel entering settled markets annually, causing an estimated Rs 40 billion loss to the national exchequer. These units, meant to serve local areas, are supplying steel across the country without paying sales tax or income tax, putting compliant manufacturers in Punjab and Sindh at a severe cost disadvantage.

The commission further noted price synchronization among major rebar producers, with retail steel prices rising by over 200% between 2018 and 2024, far exceeding international trends. Such patterns, the CCP said, "raise serious concerns of possible collusive conduct and market coordination."

The CCP also criticised the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) for failing to curb the production of substandard and uncertified steel. The absence of digital monitoring, lack of testing capacity, and overlapping jurisdictions among regulatory agencies have allowed unsafe products to flood the market, undermining consumer safety and fair competition.

Institutional inefficiencies and frequent changes in Statutory Regulatory Orders (SROs) have further complicated the business environment. The CCP said that the Ease of Doing Business Committee lacks industry-specific expertise, while bureaucratic red tape and high import duties on equipment deter new investment.

The study highlighted that globally, countries such as China, India, and Russia advanced their steel industries through targeted government support, policy stability, and innovation, whereas Pakistan continues to lag due to fragmented governance and absence of a unified national steel policy.

Calling for comprehensive reforms, the CCP recommended that the government should formulate a National Steel Policy and consider establishing a dedicated Steel Ministry to coordinate policy, regulation, and industrial development. It also urged the rationalisation of taxes, stabilisation of SROs, stricter enforcement of quality standards, and integration of undocumented units into the formal economy. The report further advised phasing out regional tax exemptions and introducing real-time digital monitoring of production to prevent underreporting and tax evasion.

The CCP also proposed incentivising Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) technology, developing local iron ore reserves, and promoting green, energy-efficient production technologies to enhance sustainability and competitiveness. It recommended expanding the Committee on Ease of Doing Business (CoEDB) to include industry experts and CCP representation, alongside strengthening the National Tariff Commission (NTC) to ensure timely responses to dumping and import surges.

The report concluded that unless the government acts swiftly to address structural flaws, Pakistan's steel industry will continue to face high construction costs, uneven competition, and limited export potential. The commission reaffirmed its commitment to collaborate with stakeholders to promote fair competition and long-term sustainability in line with global best practices.

SBP releases Annual Payment Systems Review for FY25

Report highlights robust growth in retail payments, digital channels and infrastructure development

KARACHI
NEWS DESK

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has released its Annual Report on Payment Systems, offering a detailed analysis of the current payment ecosystem, emerging trends, and key developments in the sector during Fiscal Year 2024-25. The report reveals significant growth in Pakistan's payments landscape, driven by regulatory initiatives, the expansion of digital infrastructure, and increased consumer adoption of mobile and internet-based platforms. Retail payments reached 9.1 billion transactions worth PKR 612 trillion, marking a 38% increase in volume and a 12% increase in value on a year-on-year (YoY) basis. Digital channels continued to gain momentum, with digital transactions accounting for 88% of all retail payments, up from 78% in FY23 and 85% in FY24. Mobile banking apps led with over 6.2 billion transactions, growing 52% YoY, while internet banking portals processed 297 million transactions, up 33% from the previous year. E-money wallet apps, although smaller in share, exhibited the fastest growth, with both transaction volume and value doubling during the year. The report also highlights the strengthening of underlying payment infrastructure. Raast, Pakistan's instant payment platform, saw a more than twofold increase in both transaction count and value. This growth is seen as a significant step toward enhancing digital inclusivity, reducing infrastructure reliance, and improving settlement speed. The point-of-sale network expanded to 195,849 terminals across 159,284 merchant locations, with nearly one million daily card payments, compared to 0.7 million in the previous fiscal year. E-commerce payments leaned heavily toward account and wallet-based channels, representing 93% of online transactions. The ATM network grew by more than 7%, reaching 20,341 machines, each processing an average of 140 transactions daily. SBP also upgraded the Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system to PRISM+ to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and security of retail and large-value payments. The RTGS system registered double-digit growth in transaction value, driven by government securities settlements and interbank transfers. SBP reaffirmed its commitment to fostering secure, efficient, and inclusive payment systems, ensuring that Pakistan's financial infrastructure evolves in line with global innovations while maintaining public trust and resilience.

FBR's Lifestyle Monitoring Cell identifies several individuals living far beyond their declared means: report

TAX AUTHORITY FLAGS LAVISH SPENDING BY INFLUENCERS, BUSINESS OWNERS; PROBES LUXURY VEHICLES, GOLD, FOREIGN TRAVEL, OTHER UNDECLARED ASSETS

PROFIT
MONITORING DESK

The Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) Lifestyle Monitoring Cell has identified several individuals living far beyond their declared means, prompting investigations into suspected tax evasion. Officials said details of these individuals have been forwarded to FBR headquarters and relevant Regional Tax Offices (RTOs) for formal investigation and possible action under income tax laws, The News reported.

According to the report, the exercise comes as the FBR faces mounting pressure to meet its annual revenue target of Rs14.13 trillion after a collection shortfall of Rs274 billion in the first four months of the fiscal year.

The inquiry has so far identified a Lahore-based fintech entrepreneur who owns 30 high-end vehicles worth Rs2.74 billion, including two Lamborghini Aventadors and a Rolls-Royce Phantom. However, none of these assets were declared on his income tax returns. Official scrutiny shows he filed an income of only Rs523,493 in 2019, later revising it to Rs3.4 million, and gradually increased declared income to Rs181 million by 2025 — still far below his visible wealth.

The FBR found that his revised filings also included a sharp increase in assets such as gold, cash, and personal items. Gold holdings jumped from 10 tola to 50 tola, business capital rose from Rs750,000 to Rs11 million, and luxury watch collections worth Rs2.34 million were newly introduced. Officials said the total value of his cars alone was nearly 940 times higher than his declared net assets for 2019.

The Cell also flagged two social media influencers — one from Lahore and another from Islamabad — for declaring limited income despite frequent international travel and luxury purchases. One influencer documented trips to 25 countries between 2021 and 2025 while declaring income between Rs0.4 million and Rs3.8 million annually.

Another influencer reportedly travelled to 13 destinations, including the UK, Switzerland, and Singapore, while owning luxury handbags, jewelry, designer apparel, and high-end vehicles, yet declared annual earnings of Rs3.5–5.5 million.

Officials noted that the investigation was launched after detecting a mismatch between visible spending patterns and income declared under tax law. "These taxpayers have showcased lifestyles inconsistent with their reported earnings — including assets such as imported cars, branded goods, and foreign tours," an official said.

The FBR said it is now cross-checking property records, vehicle registration data, and travel logs to quantify undeclared wealth. Cases showing clear evidence of concealment will be referred for penal action, which may include additional assessments, penalties, and prosecution under income tax laws.

Officials added that the Lifestyle Monitoring Cell is expanding its data pool through social media analytics, property registries, and third-party financial sources to track non-filers and under-reporters, in line with FBR's broader drive to document high-net-worth individuals and increase direct tax compliance.

Fauji Cement, KAPCO to jointly acquire 84.06% stake in Attock Cement

FAUJI CEMENT, KAPCO TO PURCHASE 42.03% SHARES EACH; DEAL SUBJECT TO REGULATORY APPROVALS AND FINAL AGREEMENTS

PROFIT
NEWS DESK

Fauji Cement Company Limited (FCCL) has announced that it will jointly acquire an 84.06% stake in Attock Cement Pakistan Limited (ACPL) alongside Kot Addu Power Company Limited (KAPCO), according to a disclosure submitted to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Monday.

The board of Fauji Cement, in its meeting held on November 3, 2025, approved the company's participation in the transaction following a review of overall business synergies within the group.

"The Board of Directors of Fauji Cement Company Limited in its meeting held on 3 November 2025, after considering the overall business synergies as the Company is the cement vertical of FF, has accorded its approval for the Company to be the entity that jointly acquires with KAPCO, 84.06% of the total issued and paid-up capital, and joint control of, the Target company," read FCCL's notice sent to the PSX.

Under the proposed structure, Fauji Cement will acquire 57,763,175 ordinary shares, representing 42.03% of ACPL's paid-up capital, while KAPCO will purchase an equal 57,763,174 shares, also accounting for 42.03%, taking their combined holding to 115,526,349 shares or 84.06% of ACPL's total issued capital.

The companies had earlier, on June 3, 2025, made a public announcement of intention through Integrated Equities Limited to jointly acquire control of Attock Cement. The deal remains subject to the execution of a share purchase agreement, completion of transaction documents, and receipt of necessary regulatory and procedural approvals.

On October 31, Attock Cement Pakistan Limited informed the PSX that it had received a notice from Cherat Cement Company Limited regarding the withdrawal of its Public Announcement of Intention (PAI) to acquire 84.06% of Attock Cement's paid-up voting shares.

Fauji Cement Company Limited, incorporated in Pakistan on November 23, 1992, as a public limited company under the then Companies Ordinance, 1984 (now the Companies Act, 2017), commenced its commercial operations on May 22, 1993. The company is primarily engaged in the manufacturing and sale of various types of cement.

Kot Addu Power Company Limited was established on April 25, 1996, as a public limited company under the same ordinance (now Companies Act, 2017). Its principal business involves owning, operating, and maintaining a multi-fuel-fired power plant comprising fifteen generating units with a total capacity of 1,600 megawatts in Kot Addu, District Muzaffargarh, Punjab. The company sells electricity generated from the plant exclusively to the WAPDA under a long-term Power Purchase Agreement.

Attock Cement Pakistan Limited was incorporated on October 14, 1981, as a public limited company and is a subsidiary of Pharaon Investment Group Limited Holding S.A.L., Lebanon. Its core business activity is the manufacturing and sale of cement within Pakistan and export markets.

Second phase of Green Line BRT project to be completed within a year, says Minister Ahsan Iqbal

Phase two, valued at Rs5.5 billion, will add 1.8 km to the BRT line with focus on preserving Karachi's heritage

PROFIT
MONITORING DESK

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, announced on Monday that the second phase of the Green Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project in Karachi will be completed within a year. The minister made the announcement during a briefing visit to the Green Line site, where he emphasized the need for development to proceed without compromising the city's historic structures or cultural heritage. The second phase, valued at Rs5.5 billion and spanning 1.8 kilometers, had faced delays due to legal issues that have now been resolved. The first phase of the Green Line project, costing Rs29 billion, was completed under former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, while the second phase was announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Ahsan Iqbal highlighted that three new stations are being developed under the second phase of the project. He called for strong coordination among the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB), Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), Pakistan Infrastructure Development Company Limited (PIDCL), and other relevant departments to ensure smooth project execution. The Sindh Chief Minister has assured full cooperation and plans to address KMC's concerns with the Karachi mayor, including issues related to NOCs, service road diversions, and water line relocations. In addition to the Green Line project, the minister also discussed other major infrastructure initiatives. He confirmed that the federal government will fully fund the K-IV water project, which was initially a joint venture with the Sindh government. The federal government is also working on synchronizing key projects like the K-IV, N-25, and the Karachi-Hyderabad Motorway to improve urban connectivity. Ahsan Iqbal further revealed that feasibility studies are underway with Chinese partners to remodel the Karachi-Hyderabad Motorway. Construction on the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway will soon resume with support from international banks, after delays attributed to previous leadership. The N-25 Highway project is also under federal consideration to improve connectivity between Sindh and Balochistan.

Port Qasim modernisation to help generate half of $100b revenue target, says minister

PROFIT
NEWS DESK

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said on Monday that Port Qasim will undergo major modernisation to help generate at least half of Pakistan's $100 billion revenue target, highlighting its expanding role as a key industrial and trade hub.

Speaking as chief guest at a ceremony marking Port Qasim's recognition as the world's ninth most improved container port globally, the minister said the milestone reflected the success of ongoing modernisation and management reforms. "Port Qasim improved its performance score by 35.2 points, demonstrating significant progress in reducing cargo dwell time, streamlining berth operations, and adopting digital management tools," he said.

The maritime affairs minister said the government aims to transform Port Qasim into a regional trade and industrial gateway capable of driving economic growth through infrastructure expansion, industrialization, and green maritime initiatives. The port, he added, has the potential to deliver a large share of the national revenue target owing to its industrial complex and strategic location along key shipping routes.

The minister also highlighted the government's $13 billion savings plan for the country in the next decade through the establishment of the country's first "Sea-to-Steel Green Maritime Industrial Corridor, designed to revive Pakistan Steel Mills. The initiative, he said, will integrate port operations with industrial activity, creating a continuous value chain from maritime logistics to steel manufacturing.

In the second phase of the project, Minister Chaudhry said the Iron Ore and Coal Berth (IOCB) terminal would oversee its revival. He said an Integrated Maritime Industrial Complex (IMIC) will be established there, linking ship recycling facilities with steel production to enhance domestic output and generate employment.

"The 'Steel-to-Green Sea' project will be jointly implemented by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and the Ministry of Industries to ensure sustainable industrial development," he added.

The minister said the Port Qasim Authority (PQA) is also driving multiple projects aimed at expanding capacity and improving efficiency. He cited the development of new multipurpose and container terminals, the Port Qasim Special Economic Zone (PQSEZ), and the integration of environment-friendly "Green Port" technologies. These, he said, are part of a broader modernization plan that also includes dredging, improved cargo handling systems, and digital connectivity to facilitate trade flows.

The minister said the PQSEZ will serve as a modern industrial and logistics hub attracting both local and foreign investment. He added that enhanced connectivity through upgraded road, rail, and communication networks will reduce logistics costs and strengthen national trade competitiveness. Energy and industrial projects, including LNG terminals and power plants within the port area, are also contributing to Pakistan's energy security and industrial growth. Reaffirming the government's commitment to maritime-led development, Junaid Chaudhry said modernization of port infrastructure, expansion of trade corridors, and creation of specialized industrial zones were central to achieving long-term economic stability. "The vision is to make Port Qasim not just a cargo handling facility, but a comprehensive maritime-industrial ecosystem powering Pakistan's future growth," he said.

ADB FLAGS WEAK GOVERNANCE, POOR REGULATION IN PAKISTAN'S POWER SECTOR

REPORT SAYS DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES UNABLE TO ACCESS COMMERCIAL FINANCING, RELY ON PUBLIC AND DONOR FUNDS

PROFIT
MONITORING DESK

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) has highlighted persistent weaknesses in Pakistan's power sector, noting that poor governance, lack of transparency, and ineffective regulatory frameworks continue to hinder the financial and operational performance of power distribution companies (Discos), Business Recorder reported.

According to sources in the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the observations were made during a recent ADB mission's review of the sector's challenges. The Bank found that despite reform claims, Discos remain dependent on limited government and donor financing due to their inability to secure commercial borrowing.

The ADB's findings come as the Power Division transitions from the Pakistan Electric Power Company (PEPCO) to the Power Planning and Monitoring Company (PPMC), which critics describe as a placement ground for retired officials receiving high salaries. Sources said senior executives at the new company, including those previously deemed ineligible for key roles, were appointed on packages of up to Rs3 million per month.

The report underscored that chronic issues — including high transmission and distribution losses, poor collections, and weak oversight — have left Discos financially unsustainable. Their poor financial performance and limited accountability have prevented them from attracting private investment, resulting in underfunded operations and unreliable power supply.

The ADB noted that while demand for electricity continues to grow, grid management has become more complex due to the rising use of distributed renewable energy systems, such as rooftop solar. Despite frequent fines imposed by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) for poor performance, Discos often challenge or delay payments in legal forums.

The Bank identified the absence of modern ICT systems as a key obstacle to improving efficiency and customer service. It recommended deployment of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems to reduce losses, improve billing accuracy, and enhance grid management.

According to the ADB, implementing SCADA could enable predictive maintenance and real-time monitoring, but it requires phased planning and significant investment. The Bank also emphasized that load-shedding and outages remain widespread, citing data from the Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO), where consumers faced an average of two outages per month lasting 4.8 hours in FY2023.

The report further warned that rapid expansion of rooftop solar and electric vehicle charging infrastructure poses new challenges for grid stability, including voltage fluctuations, transformer overload, and energy storage shortages. Addressing these issues, the ADB concluded, will require large-scale modernization, digital monitoring, and investments in advanced protection and storage systems.

Pakistan, Türkiye pledge to deepen trade and investment cooperation

PROFIT
NEWS DESK

Pakistan and Türkiye have reaffirmed their commitment to expanding bilateral trade and investment ties during a meeting between Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan and Turkish Trade Minister Prof. Dr. Ömer Bolat on the sidelines of the 41st Session of the COMCEC in Istanbul. Both sides reviewed progress on ongoing economic initiatives and explored new avenues for cooperation in trade, industry, and investment. The Turkish minister expressed his country's desire to strengthen economic engagement and said Türkiye would positively consider Pakistan's proposals in upcoming trade negotiations. Jam Kamal briefed his counterpart on Pakistan's reforms to improve transparency and investor confidence under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. He said Pakistan offers growing opportunities for Turkish investors in multiple sectors. Dr. Bolat invited the Pakistani minister to attend the Halal Expo in Istanbul on November 25, highlighting the potential for collaboration in halal trade and related industries. The two ministers reiterated their commitment to further consolidating economic and trade relations, underscoring the shared goal of enhancing strategic and commercial partnerships between Pakistan and Türkiye.

Hubco, FFC, Thal announce completion of Thar Energy, ThalNova power projects under CPEC

PROFIT
NEWS DESK

The Hub Power Company Limited (Hubco), Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited (FFC), and Thal Limited have announced that lenders of Thar Energy Limited (TEL) and ThalNova Power Thar (Private) Limited (TN) have declared the Project Completion Date (PCD) of their 330MW coal-based power plants on October 31, 2025.

According to separate notices submitted to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Monday, both Thar Energy Limited and ThalNova Power Thar operate mine-mouth coal-fired independent power projects (IPPs) in Thar, recognized as priority projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Thar Energy Limited achieved its commercial operations on October 1, 2022, while ThalNova began operations on February 17, 2023. Hubco stated that it directly holds 60% of TEL and indirectly owns 38.3% of TN through its subsidiary, Hub Power Holdings Limited. FFC holds a 30% shareholding in TEL, while Thal Limited, through Thal Power (Private) Limited, owns 26% of TN. The companies said the declaration of the Project Completion Date marks a major milestone, enabling the two power plants to begin paying dividends to shareholders once distributable profits and procedural approvals are finalised. Hubco, FFC, and Thal termed the achievement a significant step forward in value creation for shareholders and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening Pakistan's energy infrastructure under CPEC.

Pakistan, Uzbekistan move to establish banking channels for trade facilitation

TALKS INCLUDE OPENING UZBEK BANK BRANCHES IN KARACHI, LAHORE AND ISLAMABAD, ALONGSIDE PLANS FOR DIGITAL PAYMENT SYSTEMS

PROFIT
MONITORING DESK

Pakistan and Uzbekistan have initiated discussions to establish direct banking channels aimed at facilitating trade transactions and expanding economic cooperation between the two countries.

According to representatives from both sides, the plan includes setting up correspondent banking relationships, launching local currency trading mechanisms, and introducing digital payment and trade financing systems to streamline cross-border business operations.

The initiative follows Uzbekistan Airways' successful expansion into Pakistan, which officials said has encouraged Uzbek financial institutions to explore opening branches in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad.

Speaking to Business Recorder, representatives from Uzbekistan's Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Pakistan-Uzbekistan Trade Centre said these measures could significantly boost bilateral trade. Uzbek Ambassador Alisher Tukhtaev, during a visit to the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA), highlighted potential for joint ventures in textiles, emphasizing that both governments are working to enhance mutual market access and investment.

He said Uzbekistan's low energy costs and abundant cotton supply offer attractive opportunities for Pakistani investors. The ambassador added that both nations have signed multiple agreements, including a Preferential Trade Agreement and a tax convention, while talks between the State Bank of Pakistan and Uzbek banks on financial cooperation are under way.

Tukhtaev also pointed out that direct flights between the two countries have reduced travel time to just 90 minutes, facilitating business travel and trade. He said trilateral transit trade discussions involving Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan are in advanced stages and will further improve connectivity once finalized.

APTMA Chairman Kamran Arshad underscored the need to strengthen formal banking channels, expedite the signing of a Free Trade Agreement, and develop joint ventures in textiles. He also highlighted issues including the absence of reliable banking mechanisms, language barriers, and logistical challenges through Afghanistan that continue to hinder trade.

Trade officials said the establishment of banking links and digital systems would mark a major step in realizing the target of deepening bilateral economic relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

Flyadeal begins Lahore flights, expanding Pakistan operations to five cities

LOW-COST SAUDI CARRIER NOW OPERATES 18 WEEKLY FLIGHTS CONNECTING RIYADH WITH KARACHI, ISLAMABAD, PESHAWAR, SIALKOT AND LAHORE

PROFIT
NEWS DESK

Saudi Arabia's low-cost carrier, flyadeal, has launched scheduled flights to Lahore, marking its fifth destination in Pakistan as part of the airline's rapid regional expansion.

Last week, Flight F3 655 from Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport landed at Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport. The arrival was followed by a ceremony attended by airline and airport officials, including crew members from the inaugural flight.

According to a press statement, flyadeal will operate two weekly flights on the Lahore–Riyadh route, increasing the airline's total frequency between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to 18 flights per week. The carrier now connects five major Pakistani cities — Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar, Sialkot, and Lahore — all of which were launched in phases since February this year.

Flyadeal Chief Executive Officer Steven Greenway said the airline's expansion to five cities within eight months demonstrated its commitment to Pakistan's growing travel market. "Entering any new market takes time, but our teams have successfully built the operational and commercial foundation to serve customers across Pakistan," he stated.

The airline, a subsidiary of Saudi Arabian Airlines (Saudia), operates a fleet of 42 Airbus A320 aircraft across more than 30 destinations in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and South Asia. Under Saudi Vision 2030, flyadeal plans to expand its network to over 100 destinations with more than 100 aircraft by the end of the decade.

Officials said the new route strengthens trade and tourism connectivity between Punjab and Saudi Arabia, catering to both business and leisure travellers as flight demand between the two countries continues to rise.

PSX gains nearly 1,200 points as investor sentiment remains positive

INVESTOR CONFIDENCE BUOYED BY IMPROVED ECONOMIC SENTIMENT AND POLICY CLARITY

PROFIT
NEWS DESK

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) experienced strong buying momentum on Monday, with the benchmark KSE-100 Index gaining 1,171.42 points, or 0.72%, to close at 162,803.15.

Investor confidence remained buoyant throughout the session, pushing the index to an intra-day high of 163,935.02. The positive sentiment was attributed to institutional inflows, particularly from local mutual funds, as indicated by NCCPL data, according to Topline Securities.

Heavyweight stocks such as FFC, ENGRO, NBP, HUBC, and TRG led the market's advance, collectively contributing 1,131 points to the index's rise.

In economic news, Pakistan's headline inflation for October 2025 stood at 6.2% year-on-year (YoY), higher than the Ministry of Finance's estimated range of 5-6%, according to data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

Last week, the market ended on a subdued note, with the KSE-100 Index declining by 1.03% week-on-week to close at 161,631.73, driven by geopolitical concerns, profit-taking, and corporate earnings announcements.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani rupee appreciated slightly by Re0.01 against the US dollar in the inter-bank market, closing at 280.90.

Volume on the all-share index decreased to 949.36 million shares from

952.86 million in the previous session, while the value of shares traded rose to Rs47.58 billion from Rs42.27 billion. Hascol Petrol led trading volumes with 119.51 million shares, followed by B.O. Punjab (81.17 million shares) and World-Call Telecom (44.13 million shares).

A total of 486 companies were traded, with 262 registering gains, 176 recording losses, and 48 remaining unchanged.

Inquiry report on Rs170 billion Carec road project submitted to PM

Panel probed alleged irregularities in NHA's contract award, ghost tendering and blacklisting procedures

PROFIT
MONITORING DESK

The inquiry committee formed to investigate alleged irregularities in the Rs170 billion Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (Carec) road project has submitted its findings to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and a final decision is expected this week, Dawn reported, citing official sources in the Prime Minister's Office. The Carec Tranche-III project — part of an Asian Development Bank-funded initiative — includes four road sections from Rajanpur to Dera Ismail Khan, covering 330 kilometers in total. The project has been under scrutiny by multiple parliamentary committees and the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) for alleged rule violations in the bidding process. In September, the Senate Standing Committee on Economic Affairs recommended blacklisting a joint venture of three firms for securing the contract in violation of procurement rules. It also asked the government to inform the Asian Development Bank that the bids were "technically invalid and manipulated." The committee was constituted in August after the suspension of eight senior National Highway Authority (NHA) officials over allegations of irregularities and ghost tendering in contract awards. The inquiry committee, led by retired federal secretary Muhammad Mushtaq Ahmed, included officials from the commerce division, the Planning Commission, and former NHA engineers. It was tasked with examining NHA's practices in blacklisting contractors, evaluating the transparency of its bidding process for the Carec Tranche-III project, assessing delays, and recommending reforms. Officials said the Prime Minister's Office would decide the next course of action after reviewing the committee's report, which could include further disciplinary measures against NHA officials or a review of the bidding process.

Pakistan eyes 2026 launch for first Chinese submarine in $5 billion arms deal

ISLAMABAD ORDERED EIGHT SUBMARINES IN $5 BILLION CHINESE DEAL, WHICH WILL PROJECT POWER TOWARDS MIDDLE EAST, SAYS ADMIRAL

BEIJING
REUTERS

The Pakistan Navy expects its first Chinese-designed submarine to enter active service next year, the country's top admiral told Chinese state media, bolstering Beijing's bid to counter regional rival India and project power toward the Middle East.

A deal under which Islamabad will take delivery of eight Hangor-class submarines by 2028 is "progressing smoothly," Admiral Naveed Ashraf told the Global Times in an interview published on Sunday, adding the submarines would boost Pakistan's ability to patrol the North Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

The update on the Chinese submarine deal follows Pakistan's air force using Chinese-made J-10 fighter jets in May to shoot down an Indian Air Force Rafale aircraft, made by France.

The altercation between the nuclear-armed neighbours surprised many in the military community and raised questions over the superiority of Western hardware over Chinese alternatives.

Under the terms of the submarine agreement – reportedly worth up to $5 billion – the first four diesel-electric attack submarines will be built in China, with the remaining vessels assembled in Pakistan to improve the South Asian nation's technical capabilities. Pakistan has already launched three of the submarines into China's Yangtze River from a shipyard in the central province of Hubei.

"Chinese-origin platforms and equipment have been reliable, technologically advanced and well-suited to Pakistan Navy's operational requirements," Ashraf told the tabloid, which is published by the ruling Communist Party's People's Daily.

"As modern warfare evolves, emerging technologies such as unmanned systems, AI and advanced electronic warfare systems are becoming increasingly important. The Pakistan Navy is focusing on these technologies and exploring collaboration with China," Ashraf was also quoted as saying.

Islamabad has long been Beijing's top arms customer, and over the 2020-2024 period bought over 60% of China's weapons exports, data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute shows.

BILLION-DOLLAR BUILD UP: Along with billions in arms sales, Beijing has heavily invested in building out its connections to the Arabian Sea through a 3,000 km (1864.11 miles) economic corridor stretching from China's Xinjiang to Pakistan's deep-water port of Gwadar.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, part of President Xi Jinping's flagship 'Belt and Road' infrastructure initiative, aims to secure a route for the world's largest energy importer to bring in supplies from the Middle East, bypassing the Straits of Malacca — a strategic chokepoint between Malaysia and Indonesia that could be blocked in wartime.

The initiative also extends China's sphere of influence toward Afghanistan and Iran and onto Central Asia, and effectively encircles India, given Beijing's ties to the junta in Myanmar and good relations with Bangladesh. India currently operates three indigenously developed nuclear-powered submarines, along with three classes of diesel-electric attack submarines acquired or developed over decades with France, Germany, and Russia.

"This cooperation (with China) goes beyond hardware; it reflects a shared strategic outlook, mutual trust, and a long-standing partnership," Ashraf said. "In the coming decade, we expect this relationship to grow, encompassing not only shipbuilding and training, but also enhanced interoperability, research, technology sharing and industrial collaboration."

A ceasefire too late and still too fragile

AFTER two years of relentless bombardment, starvation, and displacement, Gaza's fragile ceasefire feels less like peace and more like a pause between acts of tragedy. The guns have fallen silent for now, but the air still hums with the memory of drones and the grief of a people brutalized into exhaustion. Israel's continuing violations of the truce are a reminder that restraint, for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government, remains an alien concept.

On Monday, the Muslim world spoke with rare unity. In Istanbul, foreign ministers from Pakistan, Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Indonesia, Qatar, and Jordan demanded Israel's immediate withdrawal from occupied Gaza and the full implementation of the October 9 ceasefire agreement. Their words carried the weight of nations that have watched, horrified and powerless, as two years of systematic destruction have unfolded under the world's watch.

That it took so long — and that it required the intervention of a U.S. administration desperate for a diplomatic win — underscores the moral bankruptcy of the international order. For too long, the suffering of Palestinians has been rationalized as collateral damage in Israel's "security operations." For too long, Western capitals have extended unconditional support to a government whose policies are openly grounded in vengeance and ethnic supremacy.

The world's patience — especially that of Muslim nations — is wearing dangerously thin. The language emerging from Ankara, Doha, and Islamabad is no longer one of quiet diplomacy but of insistence. The demand is simple: an end to occupation, accountability for war crimes, and the birth of a Palestinian state that can finally breathe without foreign tutelage. The Muslim bloc's coordination with Washington on a stabilization force for Gaza may yet offer a glimmer of pragmatic hope, but it will mean little if Israel continues to flout international law with impunity.

The moral stain of Gaza is not just Israel's; it belongs also to those who armed it, shielded it at the United Nations, and rationalized its brutality as "self-defense." Netanyahu's coalition — an alliance of zealots intoxicated by blood and messianic delusion — has turned Gaza into a proving ground for cruelty. His ministers, men like Itamar Ben-Gvir, treat Palestinian suffering as spectacle and policy alike.

For Gaza, for the millions still trapped in rubble and ruin, justice remains distant. Yet the Istanbul meeting offered a glimmer of moral clarity. The Muslim world may not have the leverage to end the occupation overnight, but its collective voice — sharpened by grief and outrage — is beginning to resonate. It must not be silenced again by Western double standards or diplomatic delay.

A ceasefire delayed by two years is no victory. It is merely a reprieve — and one the world cannot allow to collapse back into carnage.

PAKISTAN TODAY
Dedicated to the legacy of late Hameed Nizami

Arif Nizami (Late)
Founding Editor

M. A. Niazi
Editor Pakistan Today

Babar Nizami
Editor Profit

Pakistan's strategic renaissance

DR ZAFAR KHAN SAFDAR

IN the realm of international relations, few nations operate at the intersection of opportunity and risk as acutely as Pakistan. Its history, geography, and demography have consistently shaped a state that must adapt, recalibrate, and negotiate its place among regional and global powers. Positioned between China and India, bordered by Afghanistan and Iran, and with access to the strategic waters of the Arabian Sea, Pakistan's location makes it both indispensable and exposed. Its story is one of resilience, pragmatism, and the continual pursuit of relevance in a volatile world.

Recent developments underscore Pakistan's renewed strategic importance. The historic Pakistan-Saudi Strategic Mutual Defence Pact signed in September 2025 marks a new chapter in Pakistan's foreign policy. Under this agreement, aggression against one country is considered aggression against both, signalling a deepening security and political partnership. Beyond military collaboration, the pact enhances Pakistan's stature in the Muslim world, cementing its role as a key player capable of bridging regional and global interests. In tandem, Pakistan has maintained careful engagement with the United States, as exemplified by high-profile meetings between the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, and President Donald Trump. These engagements illustrate Washington's recognition of Pakistan not as a mere client state, but as a flexible strategic partner whose hybrid civilian-military governance structure allows it to adapt swiftly to changing international dynamics. Pakistan's role in global politics is uniquely defined by its ability to hedge across competing powers. The country simultaneously maintains strong ties with China, a long-standing strategic partner, while exploring deeper engagement with the United States and Gulf states. This careful balancing act demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of geopolitical imperatives: Pakistan seeks to preserve sovereignty, maximize strategic benefits, and maintain relevance without over-reliance on any single ally. It is this hybrid and adaptable character that has allowed Pakistan to navigate the complex intersections of South Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

Economically, Pakistan stands at the threshold of potential transformation. Advocates and policymakers envision the nation emerging as an 'Asian Tiger', leveraging its young, dynamic population, natural resources, and strategic location to drive industrial growth, technological innovation, and export-led development. Recent initiatives focusing on energy production, digital technology, and infrastructure development signal a deliberate strategy to unlock economic potential and attract global investment. The country's engagement with resource-rich partners, particularly in the Gulf, presents opportunities for industrial diversification and trade expansion. Such economic diplomacy, coupled with careful fiscal and social reforms, could position Pakistan as a rising regional economic hub in the next decade.

Simultaneously, Pakistan's identity as a Muslim-majority, nuclear-armed nation provides it with unique influence on the global stage. By engaging in diplomatic and cultural advocacy within the Muslim world, Pakistan has emerged as a 'Muslim champion', representing the interests of diverse communities and fostering cross-national cooperation. Its role in mediating conflicts, supporting development, and facilitating dialogue reflects not only strategic calculations but also an ethical projection of its civilizational heritage. These efforts enhance its soft power, strengthen alliances, and provide leverage in negotiating with larger global actors.

Yet, this path is fraught with challenges. Pakistan's domestic economy remains fragile, political institutions are often tested by instability, and governance structures are influenced by a delicate balance between civilian authority and military oversight. Managing these internal complexities while asserting influence externally requires constant recalibration. The hybrid nature of the state where security imperatives dominate, intelligence agencies hold significant sway, and foreign policy is shaped by pragmatism, has historically allowed Pakistan to survive turbulence, but sustained success will demand reforms, transparency, and strategic foresight.

Regionally, Pakistan's diplomacy is equally nuanced. Its interactions with India, Afghanistan, and Iran reflect a careful mixture of competition, cooperation, and hedging, while its engagement with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states demonstrates its ability to leverage religious, economic, and security partnerships simultaneously. The United States, too, views Pakistan through the lens of strategic utility, balancing counterterrorism priorities, regional stability, and economic engagement. For Pakistan, this convergence of interests offers a window to consolidate strategic gains, secure economic relief, and strengthen political legitimacy. Ultimately, Pakistan's story is one of adaptation, resilience, and vision. Its capacity to engage multiple powers, manage internal and external contradictions, and transform constraints into leverage defines not just its survival, but its potential rise as a regional influencer. By nurturing its economic potential, leveraging its strategic partnerships, and asserting moral and political leadership within the Muslim world, Pakistan has the opportunity to become both an economic powerhouse in Asia and a voice of principled influence in global affairs. The narrative of Pakistan, then, is more than geopolitics; it is a testament to the human and institutional ability to endure, adapt, and assert relevance in a turbulent world. It reminds us that power is not only measured in size or resources, but in the wisdom to navigate contradictions, the courage to act decisively, and the vision to transform adversity into opportunity. In embracing this path, Pakistan offers a compelling example of how a nation can remain indispensable, inspire confidence, and shape its destiny, even amidst the most challenging circumstances.

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"The historic Pakistan-Saudi Strategic Mutual Defence Pact signed in September 2025 marks a new chapter in Pakistan's foreign policy. Under this agreement, aggression against one country is considered aggression against both, signalling a deepening security and political partnership. Beyond military collaboration, the pact enhances Pakistan's stature in the Muslim world."

The silence beneath cracking concrete

SHEHROZ KALEEM

IN Pakistan, development is often measured by the grandeur of new projects. Motorways stretch across provinces; hospitals rise in big cities and IT parks promise digital futures. These ventures are celebrated with ribbon cuttings and televised ceremonies, symbols of progress meant to inspire national pride. Yet beneath this spectacle lies a quieter, more troubling reality. Our infrastructure, once built, is left to decay. The silence beneath cracking concrete is not just physical. It is institutional, cultural, and moral.

Infrastructure does not maintain itself. Roads fracture under the weight of neglect, water systems corrode in silence and medical equipment falters without care. In Chakwal, my hometown, the cardiac unit in DHQ Hospital stands as a monument to this neglect. A cardiologist is available at times, sometime not, but the unit lacks essential resources and the professionalism required to deliver consistent care. This is not a mere staffing oversight. It reflects a deeper flaw in our governance. We build, but we do not preserve. We inaugurate, but we do not sustain.

The problem is compounded by scarcity. In many districts, hospitals are few and far between. Health facilities are either absent or overwhelmed. The burden on existing infrastructure is immense and without maintenance, it becomes unbearable. Citizens travel long distances for basic care, only to find malfunctioning equipment or understaffed overwhelmingly crowded wards. The promise of healthcare remains unfulfilled, not because we lack ambition, but because we lack continuity.

According to the Pakistan Infrastructure Report by the State Bank of Pakistan, our country loses between four to six percent of its GDP annually due to infrastructural deficiencies. This amounts to nearly six billion dollars in economic leakage. Logistical bottlenecks alone inflate the cost of production by thirty percent, making our exports less competitive than those of our regional neighbours. These figures are not abstract. They represent lost opportunities, diminished public services and a compromised national dignity.

Despite these costs, maintenance remains an afterthought. Our procurement frameworks, governed by the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority, are designed to favour new construction. Maintenance contracts are often bundled without strategic foresight, lacking transparency and rigour. The result is a landscape dotted with decaying assets. Hospitals with broken equipment, highways riddled with potholes and water systems on the brink of collapse.

This neglect is not unique to Pakistan. Germany, often praised for its infrastructural discipline, has faced similar challenges. A 2023 study published in Energy, Sustainability and Society found that over twenty percent of German mobility infrastructure projects rejected audit recommendations without implementing corrective measures. Even advanced economies must confront the politics of upkeep.

Japan offers a more hopeful example. The Kaizen philosophy, born out of post war scarcity, emphasises continuous improvement through small, deliberate changes. In Japan, maintenance is not a bureaucratic obligation. It is a cultural imperative. Infrastructure is refined, not abandoned. Systems are cared for, not forgotten.

Pakistan must learn to value what it already possesses. The obsession with novelty has blinded us to the potential of existing assets. A well maintained road is more valuable than a new one that crumbles within a year. A hospital with functioning equipment and trained staff is more impactful than a gleaming shell devoid of care. Maintenance is not a cost. It is an investment in resilience, dignity and national pride.

I propose a reimagining of our procurement ethos. Let us institute a Maintenance First Procurement Framework, embedding lifecycle planning into every tender. Let us reward agencies that prioritise upkeep and hold accountable those that neglect it. Let us create a scoring system that values durability over novelty and sustainability over spectacle.

This is not merely a technical reform. It is a moral one. The duty of the state is not to impress its citizens with newness but to serve them with reliability. Maintenance is the quiet patriotism of governance. It is a commitment to care, continuity and competence.

Pakistan deserves better than crumbling motorways and decaying healthcare facilities. It deserves infrastructure that endures, serves and uplifts. Let us abandon the myth of new projects and embrace the quiet revolution of maintenance.

Let us build, yes. But let us also preserve.

The writer is a freelance columnist

"The problem is compounded by scarcity. In many districts, hospitals are few and far between. Health facilities are either absent or overwhelmed. The burden on existing infrastructure is immense and without maintenance, it becomes unbearable. Citizens travel long distances for basic care, only to find malfunctioning equipment or understaffed overwhelmingly crowded wards."

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Feminist leadership rising

FEMINIST leadership is not about replacing one form of control with another; it's about transforming power itself, turning it from domination into collaboration. In Pakistan, this change is long overdue.

Although the Constitution guarantees equality, women's representation in leadership remains minimal. Yet, feminist leadership is emerging at the grassroots level. From Sindh's community women's groups demanding healthcare to the Aurat March's decentralised activism, we see a growing culture of shared leadership grounded in empathy and justice.

True feminist leadership rejects tokenism. It insists that women not only participate but also shape decisions. It values listening to lived experiences as much as formal expertise, recognising that leadership built on trust is far more sustainable than authority imposed from above.

As Pakistan grapples with inequality, polarisation and climate challenges, feminist leadership offers a vision of inclusivity and dignity. When power is shared, it multiplies and with it grows the possibility of a just and humane society.

TALHA IKRAM
LAHORE

Lies that go viral

IN today's digital world, social media platforms have become a primary source of news for millions of people. But often, it is misused to spread fake news and fake information, misleading the younger generation.

The spread of fake news can have both personal and academic consequences. In a perfect world, media reports would always be fact-based, and you would be able to trust that the media you consume is reliable. But unfortunately, that is mere fantasy.

For example, during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, a fake news story spread on social media claiming that drinking concentrated alcohol or bleach could kill the virus. Many people started believing this false information and consumed harmful substances, which led to thousands of poisonings and even deaths, especially in countries like Iran and the USA.

Therefore, It is very important for people to verify news before sharing it. The government should introduce strict laws against those who spread fake news deliberately to curtail misinformation and harmful consequences.

SAMRANA TARIQ
TURBAT

Fear of numbers

LEARNING mathematics is a unique challenge in schools. Basic math skills and data analysis are not just for finance or economics but are important for daily life, as they build reasoning, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving and communication skills.

In Pakistan, schools often fail to teach mathematics effectively because they still use outdated methods that only push students toward passing grades. Math anxiety also creates a major obstacle. For example, when asked to solve a problem, many students feel nervous and fear being disrespected by teachers.

According to a survey, 67 per cent of teachers reported that their students face problems with math anxiety. Educators must make the subject exciting and engaging. Math education should be practical, responsive and fun to inspire students both in school and at home.

To conclude, mathematical contests should be held at the district level, and students must be given platforms to show their mathematical skills.

NIDA AZEEM
PIDRAK, KECH

Trump's triple failure: China, his people and his congress

QAMAR BASHIR

FOR decades, presidents of the United States have believed they could shape the world by interfering in other nations' affairs—installing leaders of their choice, propping up allies who served their interests, and sidelining or imprisoning nationalist figures who threatened American designs. This pattern, repeated from Latin America to the Middle East, has been central to Washington's projection of power. But under President Donald Trump, the limits of that model are becoming clear. Despite America's military reach and financial muscle, there now stand two forces beyond Trump's control: China, which has matured into an economic giant strong enough to resist U.S. leverage, and the American people themselves, who are openly challenging what they see as his king-like behavior. To this must be added a third failure closer to home—his inability to bring Congress into agreement, leaving the federal government paralyzed in a costly shutdown. Together, these three fronts expose the fragility of Trump's leadership and the strain on America's global standing.

For decades, Washington relied on leverage to bend others to its will. Yet China, over years of patient strategy, has taken its fate into its own hands. It has grown economically, financially, and industrially so strong that America can no longer dictate terms. Any attempt to coerce Beijing now risks countermeasures with devastating consequences for U.S. industry and commerce.

The clearest example lies in rare earth minerals and magnets, critical to modern technology, where China holds near total dominance. Nearly 70% of global rare earth mining and over 85% of refining is controlled by Beijing, a chokehold over the materials that power smartphones, electric cars, wind turbines, and advanced weapons systems. When Beijing tightened its grip on exports, the United States was brought to its knees. Without these inputs, the American defense and tech industries risk collapse. Trump's response has been to consider imposing another one-hundred percent tariff on Chinese goods—on top of the $361 billion in Chinese imports already tariffed since 2018—but Beijing has already diversified away from dependency on the American market. What once was a weapon of leverage for Washington is now a hollow threat.

China's leverage extends far beyond minerals. It holds over $775 billion in U.S. Treasury securities, the largest foreign holder after Japan, and can disrupt the global currency balance by offloading them. It has built infrastructure and currency swap agreements across the Belt and Road Initiative, encompassing more than 150 countries and covering two-thirds of the world's population, allowing trade in national currencies that bypass the dollar altogether. It possesses the capacity to redirect exports to other markets: in 2024, ASEAN overtook the US as China's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade worth more than $950 billion, compared to just $575 billion with the United States. By contrast, US options look weak. Threatening to halt sales of civilian aircraft parts may wound Boeing more than Beijing, since over 25% of Boeing's orders in the last decade came from China, worth nearly $150 billion. Proclaiming America as the ultimate consumer market rings hollow when China has been cultivating alternative demand across Asia, Africa, and Europe. Trump's bluster of tariffs and ultimatums may play well to his base, but it cannot mask the reality that the United States has lost the upper hand. Only negotiation, not confrontation, offers a way forward, but the White House seems unwilling to admit it.

If China represents Trump's international failure, the American people have emerged as his domestic challenge. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, or Syria, where U.S. power crushed resistance, Trump now faces opposition at home that cannot be bombed into silence or destabilized through covert tricks. Across states and cities, nearly two million Americans have taken to the streets, protesting what they describe as Trump's king-like conduct.

They oppose his deployment of federal immigration forces and even National Guard units into states under circumstances that many legal scholars argue violate the Constitution. The Guard is meant to be mobilized for extraordinary threats, typically from foreign enemies, not to police civilians in peacetime. To many, Trump's orders resemble the occupation of foreign lands rather than the governance of a democracy. Protesters chant that they do not want a king; they want liberty, dignity, and democracy respected. So far, their defiance has been largely peaceful, but if Trump continues his path of executive overreach, anger could boil over into violence, with consequences that would plunge the nation into crisis.

Trump has dismissed these accusations with irritation, insisting he is no monarch but a servant working day and night to restore America's dignity and power. Yet perception matters, and his tone has only fueled resistance. Unlike pliant foreign regimes, the American people are vocal, organized, and fully aware of their rights. They are not easily subdued. If Trump cannot win their trust, his authority will be weakened from within, regardless of what strength he projects abroad. For a president who promised to put America first, alienating America itself is a damning irony. Perhaps he should take inspiration from his so-called "favorite" Field Marshal Asim Munir of Pakistan—a man who has managed to bend under his thumb not only the National Assembly, Senate, Judiciary, and Government, but also an entire population of 250 million. If Trump truly yearns to rule unchecked, maybe a mentoring session with Munir could teach him the dark arts of silencing institutions and crushing dissent. It would be a masterclass in authoritarian success, but one that destroys democracy in the process.

On a third front, Trump has stumbled in the political heart of Washington: the relationship with Congress. It is now the twenty-second day of a government shutdown, with no bipartisan agreement in sight to reopen the federal apparatus. The impasse revolves around social spending, especially healthcare and Social Security benefits for seniors, retirees, and the disabled. Democrats insist these programs be preserved at their previous levels; Trump threatens to cut them unless his budget priorities are met.

In retaliation, he has warned that Democratic initiatives and projects will be frozen entirely if they refuse to yield. This standoff has left more than 800,000 federal workers unpaid, public services crippled, and international confidence in US governance shaken. The economic cost has been staggering: independent estimates suggest the shutdown has already drained nearly $3 billion per week from the US economy, with projections of as much as $24 billion in losses if it lasts two months, shaving 0.2% off quarterly GDP growth. Small businesses relying on federal contracts are collapsing, loan approvals are frozen, and families living paycheck to paycheck are being forced into debt. The possibility that the shutdown could extend for months looms over the nation like a shadow, underlining not only a breakdown of negotiation but a collapse of leadership. The president, ultimately responsible for ensuring the functioning of government, has instead become the architect of its paralysis.

> **"On a third front, Trump has stumbled in the political heart of Washington: the relationship with Congress. It is now the twenty-second day of a government shutdown, with no bipartisan agreement in sight to reopen the federal apparatus. The impasse revolves around social spending, especially healthcare and Social Security benefits for seniors, retirees, and the disabled."**

The damage reverberates abroad. Allies and rivals alike are watching, noting that America cannot manage its own house, let alone dictate terms to others. Each passing day without resolution chips away at U.S. credibility. For Trump, the stakes are immense. His ability to govern effectively is being judged not only by his opponents but by history itself. To fail simultaneously in managing China, his own people, and his own legislature would mark not just a troubled presidency but a broken model of leadership. Yet so far, he has responded with threats and defiance rather than compromise and wisdom.

The way forward is clear, though whether Trump will take it is uncertain. He must abandon the illusion of unilateral control and return to democratic norms. He must negotiate in good faith with Congress to restore government operations, even if it means conceding ground. He must respect the constitutional limits on deploying federal forces in states, reassuring the public that their freedoms are safe. And he must recognize that with China, confrontation is a dead end; dialogue is the only path that preserves America's interests without triggering global economic disruption. Every war, whether military, trade, or political, ends at the negotiating table. Sooner is always better than later, for the longer conflict drags on, the greater the damage to all sides.

Trump has prided himself on being a deal-maker, but at this crossroads he has become a breaker of deals, a divider of people, and a trigger of crises. His legacy will not be judged by the force of his threats but by his capacity to resolve conflicts constructively. If he fails to change course, his presidency may be remembered not for making America great again, but for revealing just how fragile its greatness had become.

The writer retired as Press Secretary the President, and is former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France and former MD, Shalimar Recording & Broadcasting Company Limited

Mamdani is poised to win

It's time for Democrats to take a stand in support of Mamdani, especially since he is likely to be the person fielding the most attacks from Trump in the coming years

SARA PEQUENO
USA TODAY

WE'RE on the eve of one of the most consequential races in New York City's history, and Republicans seem poised to attack Democratic mayoral nominee Zohran Mamdani all the way to Election Day. The GOP is now convinced that Mamdani, who has been struggling to obtain endorsements from longtime Democrats, is apparently the one calling the shots within the party. Congressional Republicans even seem ready to blame him for the monthlong government shutdown they have no desire to end. "The Democratic Party has changed, Mamdani is now running the party," House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-Louisiana, said during an Oct. 29 news conference about the government shutdown. "That party has changed. The American people still have the same needs."

This isn't the first time Republicans have fearmongered about Mamdani. They are clearly threatened by the 34-year-old democratic socialist and are fearful of what New York City will become if he's elected mayor. My fear, however, is that these attacks are just beginning and will only get worse if Mamdani does prevail on Nov. 4. Since Mamdani became the Democratic nominee, Republicans have been lobbing attacks at the state assemblyman who seems poised to become the next mayor of New York City. Members of the GOP have demanded that President Donald Trump's administration consider deporting Mamdani, while others have made horrific comments about his Muslim identity. Trump has also made multiple comments about Mamdani since the primary election, including falsely labeling the nominee a "communist" and claiming that he is "here illegally." Shortly after the primary election in June, the president threatened to arrest Mamdani. Recently, Trump vowed to send in the National Guard and withhold federal funds from New York City if Mamdani were elected, claiming, "We have a communist ... doesn't know a thing, probably never worked a day in his life, and he sort of caught on."

It's wild to me that Republican leaders suddenly care so much about the fate of New York City, given how much they love to complain about the Democratic stronghold. What worries me is that Republicans are so hellbent on this narrative of the city's destruction that Mamdani's potential election victory will lead Trump to attack the city for years to come. Of course, I'm not the only one worried about this. Independent candidate Andrew Cuomo has said as much on the campaign trail, arguing that this is the reason that he, a scandal-ridden former governor of New York, should be the one to take over city hall. "If Mamdani wins, you are going to see Trump come in here and take over New York City," Cuomo told podcast host Stephen A. Smith on Oct. 29. "You mark my words." I don't buy that. Cuomo is trying to stoke fears among New Yorkers just as much as the Republicans are – and Democrats should be wary of listening to him. Since Trump's reelection, several Democratic elected officials have flirted with right-wing talking points instead of standing strong in their beliefs. Rep. Tom Suozzi, D-New York, said after the election that Democrats lost votes for "pandering to the far left," throwing trans people under the bus in the process. Suozzi, who represents part of Long Island, also recently chose to buck the party and endorsed Cuomo, declaring himself "a democratic capitalist, not a democratic socialist." Other Democrats are showing their spinelessness by refraining from commenting on the mayoral race altogether. Both New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer have failed to endorse Mamdani, signaling their discomfort with someone as far left as Mamdani becoming a leader in the party. If Mamdani does win, he's going to need support from his fellow Democrats when Trump inevitably tries to go after New York City. It's time for longtime members of the party to stand with him, instead of letting him be relentlessly attacked by the president of the United States and his acolytes. It's time for Democrats to take a stand in support of Mamdani, especially since he is likely to be the person fielding the most attacks from Trump in the coming years.

'The fourth estate will not survive unless defended'

THE DAILY STAR
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

Dictating Reality examines how states are reshaping the news to serve their political aims worldwide. What prompted you to explore this phenomenon, and how did your understanding of media control evolve throughout your research?

The idea of writing Dictating Reality came during our research into Russian and Chinese state media coverage of the 2020 US election. We wondered whether they would support or oppose Donald Trump's re-election and how they would cover his claims that Joe Biden's victory was fraudulent.

This was during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, which broadened our focus. With daily reporting about how governments were explaining their Covid responses (and non-responses), we started examining news in many more countries. We were struck by how many democracies were using authoritarian news control techniques—censorship, taking control of state media, attacking journalists, and limiting funding and access only to pro-government outlets.

We then found something more worrying: that more and more citizens disagree not just on the truth about things like Covid-19; they appear to be living in entirely different realities. Not only that, government efforts to control the news were central to how these alternative realities were spreading. In Russia, the government claimed that its full-scale invasion of Ukraine was to liberate it from fascism, rather than subjugate it. China was claiming that it is not the world's leading authoritarian state, but the world's leading democracy. Leaders like Donald Trump in the US or Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil peddled a version of reality in which they were the only ones who could save democracy from its enemies, while their opponents saw them as would-be tyrants seeking to destroy democracy. Dictating Reality documents how these leaders and governments try to influence the news to spread their parallel realities.

What underlying political or technological shifts have made this authoritarian turn in news possible in autocracies and democracies alike?

A major shift is a change in norms—that is, established behaviours—whereby more democracies are adopting authoritarian approaches to news. Previously, a White House press briefing would include leading American and international news outlets, even though the US government knew some outlets would criticise them, because holding power to account was recognised as the role of the press in a democracy. That idea is under threat. Now some of those outlets are banned by the Trump administration. Others it has sued. In the UK, successive governments have repeatedly questioned the impartiality of the public service broadcaster, the BBC, and reduced its funding.

Technology has not caused these changes, but it has contributed, because social media enables governments to bypass news outlets that might criticise them. Jair Bolsonaro ignored mainstream news outlets, and created his own (dis)information ecosystem on social media. He did not need mainstream media to win the presidency. Other leaders combine new technologies with older ones. India's Narendra Modi rarely does press conferences, instead using social media, and supportive news channels like Republic TV. Trump uses his platform, Truth Social, and old-school political rallies. These leaders use these tools to convince audiences that, to get the truth, they should just listen to their leader and ignore the news media (thereby avoiding challenge, scrutiny, and blame).

Your book describes how governments construct "alternative realities." How does this manipulation differ from traditional propaganda, and why do citizens believe these versions of reality even when evidence contradicts them?

There is a significant overlap, as we are essentially describing the spread of authoritarian propaganda techniques in democracies, accelerated by the technologies of the digital age. A classic example is how leaders like Donald Trump, Viktor Orbán of Hungary, or Narendra Modi claim their countries are threatened by a range of enemies (usually some combination of opposition politicians and ethnic minorities), and that they are the only ones who can save them from destruction. Stoking fear this way is a century-old propaganda technique. But the range of tools to spread these narratives has multiplied. Social media algorithms prioritise whatever content is most engaging, provocative, and popular. Fear-based messaging spreads more easily. Whether it is true is often irrelevant.

Why do people believe these versions of reality even when evidence contradicts them? First, because people may not be aware of the evidence, because their personalised information feeds, or the groups they join, do not engage with alternative perspectives. Secondly, they may not find the source credible. When Trump was asked why he attacks the press, he admitted that he does it so that when they criticise him, no one believes them. Third, because the stories these leaders tell are appealing. They present a simple view of the world and provide people with a sense of belonging. It is easier to blame a single ethnic minority for a country's problems than recognise the complex issues societies face. It is easier to believe a charismatic leader could save the nation rather than trusting in the messy democratic process. It is more appealing to believe your country is defending others, not attacking them; that your country is right and others are wrong.

Social media platforms are often blamed for amplifying misinformation. In your research, how do state strategies intersect with algorithmic systems—are governments adapting to exploit them, or are the platforms themselves complicit in creating echo chambers?

The political actors that get their versions of reality to dominate successfully exploit the technologies of the day. Social media algorithms, by prioritising engaging content over factual content, favour attention-grabbing over detail. They favour the controversial lie over the prosaic truth. While the effect of echo chambers should not be exaggerated, it is easier to create them than ever. In Brazil's 2022 election, Lula da Silva and Jair Bolsonaro's campaigns used WhatsApp groups to spread messages to their followers. Their campaign webpages listed thousands of groups citizens could join, and party administrators could feed them the latest message or meme. Platforms are complicit by being structured in a way that determines how information spreads, driven by their desire to maximise profit by maximising engagement. But for political success, what matters most is how governments use the media available to them. The same is true of generative AI, which is why countries like China are fighting to determine which AIs their citizens use. Control those, and one controls what version of reality citizens experience.

The book argues that the media's traditional role as a democratic watchdog is weakening. What does genuine resistance look like for journalists today, especially in countries where independent media face financial and political constraints?

It is easy to make recommendations from the sidelines while journalists face growing intimidation and harassment. Yet resistance remains crucial. There is still demand for high-quality, factual information.

Fact-checking is another area under severe financial threat, particularly since Meta and X deprioritised it. But even if fact-checkers struggle to keep up with the volume of disinformation produced online, political actors often stop spreading narratives once they have been debunked.

Finally, we must remember that the semi-constitutional role that journalists play as a "Fourth Estate" will not survive unless defended.

In practical terms, what can be done by media institutions, educators, and readers themselves to rebuild trust in journalism and resist state manipulation of truth?

We must recognise that our institutions of knowledge are being re-formed in the digital age, and that this provides huge opportunities both for those who want to destroy them and for those who want to re-build them. As civil society, we must recognise that unless we participate in the reinvention of these institutions, they will not remain authoritative and credible. Jonathan Rauch talks about the "constitution of knowledge"—the methods societies have developed over centuries to establish the truth (by which we mean what is knowable, public, and verifiable)—including through science, academia, the justice system, and journalism. Each is now under threat from authority figures who think that weakening them will enhance their own power. Rather than retreat from this threat, or align with those who are creating alternative realities, we need to work out how to reconfigure these institutions so they are fit for the age in which we live.

NIGERIA REJECTS TRUMP'S ALLEGATIONS OF CHRISTIAN GENOCIDE

ABUJA
AGENCIES

NIGERIA has strongly dismissed U.S. President Donald Trump's claims of a "genocide" against Christians, calling the accusations unfounded and politically motivated, even as Trump suggested the possibility of U.S. military intervention in the West African country.

In a statement on Sunday, Trump indicated that he was considering "a range of military options," including the deployment of troops or air strikes, to stop what he described as the "mass killings of Christians" in Nigeria. "They're killing Christians and killing them in very large numbers. We're not going to allow that to happen," Trump said while speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One. When asked about sending U.S. troops or launching strikes, he responded, "Could be, I mean, a lot of things — I envisage a lot of things."

Nigeria's government quickly rejected the accusations, asserting that the violence in the country is not based on religion but is part of broader challenges involving terrorism and banditry. Kimiebi Imomotimi Ebienfa, a spokesperson for Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized in an interview with Al Jazeera, "We are not proud of the security situation

that we are passing through, but to go with the narrative that only Christians are targeted — no, it is not true. There is no Christian genocide in Nigeria."

Ebienfa explained that attacks from groups such as Boko Haram and al-Qaeda-linked militants affect people of all faiths, including Muslims and traditional worshippers. "The killings were not restricted to Christians alone. Muslims are being killed. Traditional worshippers are being killed… The majority is not the Christian population," he said.

While Nigeria reaffirmed its commitment to working with international partners, the government also warned that any U.S. intervention should respect the country's sovereignty. "We are ready to work with partners to fight terrorism, but not any passive action that will undermine the sovereignty of our country," Ebienfa added.

Daniel Bwala, an adviser to President Bola Tinubu, echoed these sentiments, telling Reuters that Nigeria would welcome U.S. assistance, as long as it recognizes the country's territorial integrity. Despite Trump's labeling of Nigeria as a "disgraced country," Bwala downplayed the comments, noting, "We don't take it literally, because we know Donald Trump thinks well of Nigeria. I am sure by the time these two leaders meet and sit, there would be better outcomes in our joint resolve to fight terrorism."

Trump's remarks came a day after the U.S. reinstated Nigeria on its list of "Countries of Particular Concern" for alleged violations of religious freedom, alongside countries like China, North Korea, Russia, Myanmar, and Pakistan.

Nigeria, with a population of over 200 million, is divided between a predominantly Muslim north and a largely Christian south. The country has faced insurgencies from Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) for more than 15 years, leading to tens of thousands of deaths and widespread displacement.

President Tinubu, a Muslim married to a Christian pastor, has rejected claims of religious persecution. He emphasized that his administration supports inclusivity, pointing to the recent appointment of a Christian as Nigeria's new defence chief as evidence of his commitment to equality and balance.

$142m magnet plant to boost rare earth sector: PM Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR
AGENCIES

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said the development of a 600 million ringgit ($142 million) super magnet manufacturing facility in the state of Pahang will strengthen the nation's rare earth sector, state media reported. In July, Australia's Lynas Rare Earths and South Korea's JS Link signed a deal to develop a 3,000-tonne neodymium magnet manufacturing facility near Lynas' advanced materials plant in Malaysia's Kuantan district. Anwar said Malaysia's trade minister would monitor the project as it involves rare-earth processing, state news agency Bernama reported on Saturday. "JS Link has already purchased the land and wants to begin operations, so this is no longer a memorandum of understanding," Anwar said. "The investment is in, the land is ready, so this is about accelerating the process."
The collaboration will bolster Malaysia in the advanced materials and clean technology sectors, Anwar said, while supporting efforts to build a supply chain for critical minerals. Malaysia has around 16.1 million metric tons of rare earth deposits, according to government estimates, but it lacks the technology to mine and process them. The country is seeking foreign investment and technology sharing opportunities to mine and process raw rare earths. Rare earths are essential in high-tech manufacturing, including electric vehicles, semiconductors, and missiles.

Three dead, eight missing in Nepal Himalayan avalanche

KATHMANDU
REUTERS

Three climbers, including a foreign national, were killed and eight others were reported missing after an avalanche struck a climbing expedition on a Himalayan peak in Nepal, police said on Monday. Among those missing on the Yalung Ri Himal mountain — which rises to 5,630 metres (18,470 feet) in the Dolakha district northeast of Kathmandu — were five foreign nationals, police official Gyan Kumar Mahato told Reuters. The nationalities of the deceased and the missing climbers were not immediately known. Four injured climbers were evacuated to a nearby village, while a search operation for the missing, including a helicopter mission, was underway, Mahato said. "We have also dispatched ground search-and-rescue teams from the army and police and are awaiting developments," he added.

Uzbekistan Airways increases flight frequency to enhance air connectivity between Uzbekistan and Pakistan

TASHKENT
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Uzbekistan Airways, the national carrier of the Republic of Uzbekistan, is expanding its flight operations to Pakistan.
Starting from October 28, 2025, the airline operates a total of four weekly flights between Uzbekistan and Pakistan, doubling the frequency of its Tashkent-Islamabad service and continuing its regular Tashkent-Lahore flights.
According to Uzbekistan Airways, the decision to expand its services was driven by strong passenger demand, with previous Islamabad flights often operating at full capacity and tickets selling out days in advance. "Tashkent-Islamabad-Tashkent" flights operate twice weekly, every Tuesday and Saturday. "Tashkent-Lahore-Tashkent" flights also operate twice weekly, every Wednesday and Friday.
With this expansion, Uzbekistan Airways strengthens its role as a key bridge between Central and South Asia, offering Pakistani travelers greater choice, convenience, and connectivity to destinations across the world. Flights from Tashkent to Islamabad take around two hours, offering a fast and efficient link between the two capitals. One-way fares start from approximately USD 200, while round-trip tickets are available from USD 400, making this route one of the most affordable and time-saving options for business, education, and leisure travelers alike.
"Tashkent-Lahore" route is equally attractive, with one-way fares from approximately USD 200 and round-trip fares from approximately USD 400. All flights are operated on modern, comfortable aircraft, ensuring passengers enjoy world-class onboard service, professional crews, and the highest safety standards.
Tashkent International Airport, the airline's primary hub, is strategically positioned at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, offering passengers efficient connections and a comfortable travel experience. Beyond direct travel between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, the Airport serves as a strategically located transit hub connecting travelers to over 50 international destinations across Europe.

Trump rules out sending Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine

WASHINGTON
NEWS DESK

U.S. President Donald Trump said that he is not currently considering a deal to allow Ukraine access to long-range Tomahawk missiles, signaling continued reluctance to escalate the conflict with Russia.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One while returning from Palm Beach, Florida, Trump said, "No, not really," when asked if he would approve a deal allowing NATO allies to transfer Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine.He added, however, that his stance could change, leaving the possibility open for future consideration.

Trump's remarks come amid growing pressure from Kyiv and some NATO members to strengthen Ukraine's long-range strike capabil-

ities against Russian positions.

The proposal to sell Tomahawk missiles to NATO countries for potential transfer to Ukraine was discussed between Trump and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte during their meeting at the White House on October 22.

Rutte said on Friday that the matter was "under review," emphasizing that the final decision rested with Washington. Tomahawk missiles, capable of striking targets up to 2,500 kilometers (1,550 miles) away, would allow Ukraine to hit deep inside Russian territory, including Moscow — a move the Kremlin has warned would be seen as a major escalation.

Russian officials have repeatedly cautioned against the provision of long-range missiles to Ukraine, warning of "serious consequences" if Western nations proceed.

Despite President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's repeated appeals for advanced weapons, the Trump administration has maintained a cautious stance, focusing on defensive aid rather than offensive systems with the potential to strike Russian soil.

At least 20 killed, scores injured as 6.3 quake rocks Afghanistan's north

KABUL
NEWS DESK

A strong earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale struck northern Afghanistan early Monday, killing at least 20 people and injuring dozens more, officials and monitoring agencies said.

The tremor hit before dawn with its epicentre near Mazar-i-Sharif at a depth of 28 kilometres, according to the US Geological Survey. The shockwaves were powerful enough to rattle homes across the northern provinces and were also felt in Kabul, over 400 kilometres away.

Authorities in Samangan reported most of the casualties, with 12 confirmed dead and more than 140 injured. Many of those hurt were discharged after receiving treatment, officials said, adding that residential buildings and public sites had suffered damage.

Part of the historic Blue Mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif, one of Afghanistan's most visited landmarks, was also damaged, with debris seen scattered in its courtyard.

Residents described rushing outdoors as the ground shook violently. "It was terrifying. My house trembled and the windows shattered," said Rahima, a resident of Mazar-i-Sharif.

The quake's tremors were felt in neighbouring Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

Afghanistan, lying on a major fault line between the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates, experiences frequent earthquakes. In recent years, a series of severe tremors have killed thousands, including a 6.0-magnitude quake in August that devastated eastern districts.

The latest disaster adds to the country's mounting humanitarian crisis as the Taliban government struggles with shortages of aid, food, and medical supplies.

PUBLIC NOTICE LEGAL HEIRS TRANSFER

Beware that Farzana Anwar (Shareholder) bearing CNIC 35202-2273544-6 W/O Muhammad Anwar died on 27-Sep-2025. We are the legal heirs of her plot # 494 Sector AA, Phase 4, Measuring 10 Marlas & 657 Sqft Situated in Defence Housing Authority, Lahore Cantt.

1. Muhammad Anwar (Husband) 2. Aneela Anwar (Daughter)
3. Humaira Farhan (Daughter) 4. Sumaira Yousaf (Daughter)
5. Sana Anwar (Daughter) 6. Madiha Anwar (Daughter)

Anyone having objections may contact Secretary Defence Housing Authority, Main Office Complex Phase 6 Lahore Cantt within 15 days of the publication of this notice.

PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD
INVITE TO TENDER (ITT) FOR MEDIA RIGHTS OF
DOMESTIC CRICKET EVENTS FROM AUGUST 2025 TILL SEPTEMBER 2026

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), invites sealed bids from suitable and experienced parties for the **Media Rights of Domestic Cricket Events from August 2025 till September 2026**. Detailed relevant information and invite to tender (ITT) can be obtained free of cost from the undersigned, upon written request from an authorized representative of the interested party, on working days from **9 A.M. to 5 P.M**. Pakistan Standard Time ("PST") on or before **November 17, 2025**. Queries may be addressed in writing to the below mentioned email address. Information obtained from any other source shall not be deemed as official.

Fahad Ajmal, Consultant Broadcast and Production,
Pakistan Cricket Board Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore, Pakistan
pcb.bidding@pcb.com.pk
Tel: (92-42) 35717231-4, Fax: (92-42) 35711860

Proposals should be submitted in sealed envelopes in the manner set forth in the ITT, so as to reach the above address by or before **2:00 P.M. PST** on **November 19, 2025**. Technical Proposals shall be opened at **4:00 P.M. PST** on **November 19, 2025** at the offices of PCB at National Cricket Academy, Lahore. Opening date and time of Financial proposal will be notified to technically qualified bidders.

PCB reserves the right in its discretion to cancel or amend the entire pre-qualification/bidding process at any stage and to reject any or all proposals/bids prior to accepting the same.

PID(L)1191/25

UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY, LAHORE

Hiring of Consultant Pharmacist (Short Term Consultancy)

UET Lahore intends to hire a Consultant Pharmacist on short-term consultancy basis for a period of six months. The consultant will assist the UET Health Clinic in the procurement of medicines directly from the manufacturers in compliance with Punjab Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rules 2014. The consultant is to be engaged under the Short Term Consultancy Rule of PPRA.

Scope of Work:
- Provide expert advice and support for the procurement of medicines in accordance with PPRA Rules through E-Procurement.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of current procurement needs, including demand forecasting for essential medicines.
- Assist in preparation of technical specifications, bidding documents for medicine procurement directly from the medicine manufacturers.
- Coordinate with suppliers and internal stakeholders to ensure timely delivery and compliance with concerned procurement procedures.
- Supervise quality control related to medicines procured and ensure conformity with regulatory standards.
- Maintain an updated inventory system and assist in stock management during the consultancy period.

Qualification & Experience:
- Degree in Pharmacy (Pharm-D) from a recognized university and registered with Pharmacy Council of Pakistan
- Strong understanding of PPRA Rules 2014

General Instructions:
The interested candidates may submit their application with all relevant documents to the Registrar Office by 18-11-2025 before 4:00 pm.

Registrar
University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore
Phone: 042-99250208 Email: registrar@uet.edu.pk

IPL-5839

China rejects Trump claim it is secretly testing nuclear weapons

BEIJING
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

China on Monday dismissed a claim by U.S. President Donald Trump that Beijing is secretly testing nuclear weapons, saying it remains committed to a self-defensive nuclear strategy and its pledge to halt nuclear testing.

As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and a responsible nuclear-weapon state, China upholds its no-first-use nuclear weapons policy and firmly supports the authority of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told media at a regular press briefing.

Mao expressed hope that the U.S. will also strictly honor its obligations under the CTBT and maintain its own moratorium on nuclear testing, and will take concrete actions to uphold the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

China, Germany need to develop stable, sustainable ties policy:Wang Yi

China and Germany need to develop a more stable and sustainable policy framework to ensure that bilateral relations will always stay on the right track, said Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Monday. Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks during a phone call with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul, which was initiated at the latter's request.

Wang said an important lesson from the growth of China-Germany relations is the need for mutual respect, with win-win cooperation as the relationship's compass and partnership its correct definition.

Maintaining the sound and steady growth of relations between China and Germany, two major countries and important economies, serves the interests of both sides and meets the expectations of all parties, he said, adding that it also contributes to world peace and stability.

Given the two countries' different histories, cultures and social systems, it is only natural that differences may arise, said Wang. The two sides should maintain communication and dialogue, enhance understanding, remove misunderstandings and strengthen mutual trust, he said, adding that both sides should not engage in "megaphone diplomacy," or make groundless accusations that go against the facts.

Wang said the Taiwan question is China's internal affair and a matter of China's core interests, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

The one-China principle is the most important political foundation of China-Germany relations, he said.

Invitation to Bid
(CUI-VHR/PUR/CW.25/02)
Construction of Four Classrooms & Four Offices at CUI Vehari

COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), Vehari Campus, a public sector University of Ministry of Science & Technology (MoST) invites bids through **e-Pak Acquisition & Disposal System (EPADS) https://eprocure.gov.pk** from the original manufacturers / authorized distributors / suppliers registered with Income and Sales Tax departments and who are also on Active Taxpayers list (ATL) of FBR for the work titled **"Construction of Four Classrooms & Four Offices at CUI Vehari".**

2. The procedure of open competitive bidding is **Single Envelope.**
3. The complete tendering process will be carried out through **e-Pak Acquisition & Disposal System (EPADS) https://eprocure.gov.pk.**
4. The registration of applicants (Company/Firm) with **PEC in Relevant Category C-5** or above having specialized codes, renewed for the year 2024-25.
5. Interested bidders/Companies/Firms/Joint Ventures/Contractors are requested to register themselves on the **e-Pak Acquisition & Disposal System (EPADS) https://eprocure.gov.pk/#/supplier/registration** and submit their tender documents through the **EPADS.**
6. The bid security for the bid is **3% of the total amount** in the form of Call Deposit/Bank Draft (refundable) drawn in favor of "COMSATS University Islamabad, Vehari Campus" **(FTN: 9013701- 9);** scanned copy of which is required to be uploaded through **EPADS** and hard copy must be submitted physically (in separate envelope) along with hard-copy of sealed bidding document on the closing date of the tender to COMSATS University Islamabad, Vehari Campus on the address given below.
7. The tender documents must be submitted via **EPADS** latest by **20th November, 2025** till **1100 hours.** Bids will be opened at **1130 hours** on the same day, in the presence of bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the same address. This advertisement is also available on the campus website at **https://vehari.comsats.edu.pk/.**

Purchase Officer
COMSATS University Islamabad(CUI), Vehari Campus
(A public sector University of Ministry of Science & Technology)
Multan Road, Vehari
Tel: 067-3602803, **Mob:** 0307-2282275 & 0333-6908389

PID(I)3685/25 **www.comsats.edu.pk**

CORPORATE CORNER

COMSATS University receives over 2400 laptops in PMYLS Ceremony

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) participated in the Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme (PMYLS) award ceremony organized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) under the vision of the Government of Pakistan to empower youth through digital inclusion and academic excellence. The event was graced by the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Shahbaz Sharif. Prof. Dr. Raheel Qamar, Rector of COMSATS University Islamabad was also present in the ceremony. Saqib UL Islam, a student of bachelor's in international relations from COMSATS University Islamabad hailing from Waziristan received the laptop from the Prime Minister during the ceremony. This year CUI students received over 2400 laptops in the 2025 PM Youth Laptop Scheme cycle.
Prof. Dr. Raheel Qamar lauded the efforts of the Higher Education Commission in advancing technological capacity and promoting educational opportunities for the youth of Pakistan. He said that this initiative of the Government of Pakistan was critical for advancing skills essential for Industry 5.0 among the masses.

Syed Fakhar Jehan Assumes Charge as Provincial Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Syed Fakhar Jehan formally assumed charge as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control on Monday, here at Peshawar.Speaking on the occasion, the Provincial Minister expressed his gratitude to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Founder Chairman Imran Khan and Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mohammad Sohail Afridi for reposing confidence in him and including him once again in the provincial cabinet. He said his reappointment as Minister was a matter of great pride not only for him but also for the people of Buner and the workers of PTI.Highlighting his previous tenure, Syed Fakhar Jehan said that during his earlier assignment as Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, he served the public with dedication and commitment and earned the trust of the people through his performance. He added that he would now perform his responsibilities of public services in new dymention of Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control with the same zeal and determination to ensure continuity in public service and to put this important sector on the path of progress and efficiency.

Bank Alfalah Pledges Additional USD 5 Million to Rebuild Flood-Hit Communities

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

The Chairman of Bank Alfalah, His Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan Excellency and the Board of directors has approved an additional USD 5 million, equivalent to PKR 1.4 billion, to help rebuild communities devastated by the 2025 floods. This latest commitment brings the Bank's total contribution towards comprehensive flood relief and rehabilitation since the 2022 floods to USD 15 million, highlighting its sustained efforts to support communities following catastrophic climate eventsThe announcement was made by Atif Bajwa, President and Chief Executive Officer of Bank Alfalah, during a press conference held in Karachi."At Bank Alfalah, we aspire to be more than a financial institution; we are a caring bank," said Atif Bajwa. "We are deeply grateful to our Chairman and Board for this generous pledge. It reflects our shared belief that rebuilding lives and strengthening climate resilience."The newly announced funds will be channeled through a network of partner non-governmental organisations to restore infrastructure, rebuild livelihoods, and enhance resilience across Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan.

WORLD BANK URGES PAKISTAN TO REFORM TRADE POLICY, OVERHAUL 10 PREFERENTIAL AGREEMENTS TO BOOST EXPORTS

- LENDER CALLS FOR FLEXIBLE EXCHANGE RATE, LOWER INPUT COSTS, AND STRONGER MARKET ACCESS TO REVERSE DECADES OF EXPORT DECLINE

PROFIT
MONITORING DESK

THE World Bank has advised Pakistan to overhaul its trade and economic policies by improving preferential trade agreements (PTAs) with ten partner countries, ensuring a flexible exchange rate, and addressing high energy and input costs to reverse decades of declining exports.

In its policy note to the government, the Bank said Pakistan's exports had dropped from 16% of GDP in the 1990s to around 10% in 2024, with most earnings concentrated in low-value textile and agricultural products. It added that economic growth had relied mainly on debt and remittance-driven consumption rather than export expansion.

The Bank urged Pakistan to allow the rupee to reflect market forces by maintaining a flexible exchange rate and deepening the interbank market without central bank intervention. It called for publishing detailed interbank data and

gradually eliminating ad hoc measures that distort market transparency.

It noted that tightly managed exchange rates, combined with rising imports during growth periods, had repeatedly led to balance-of-payments crises, eroding investor confidence and limiting private investment.

The Bank identified high tariffs, red tape, and government dominance in over 200 state-owned enterprises as major obstacles to productivity. It said such distortions had discouraged investment and hindered exporters' access to finance. The report added that logistical bottlenecks, customs inefficiencies, and weak export promotion mechanisms further constrained growth.

It estimated Pakistan's "missing exports" at nearly $60 billion, citing expensive electricity and limited digital infrastructure as key competitiveness challenges.

According to the Bank, Pakistan's ten trade agreements—mostly limited to tariff concessions—remain underutilised. It recommended upgrading these to cover services, investment, and digital trade while expanding into new markets such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

The report emphasised the need to strengthen Pakistan's trade negotiation capacity, regularly consult exporters, and establish monitoring systems for agreement implementation.

The Bank welcomed recent tariff reforms but said they must be complemented by operationalising the EXIM Bank, enhancing trade facilitation, and ensuring a flexible exchange rate. It also called for building the National Tariff Commission's capacity to monitor unfair trade practices and pursue deeper tariff reductions with key partners.

Chairman CDA visits Assan Khidmat Markaz Building

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, visited the "Assan Khidmat Markaz" Building in G-9 on Monday along with a delegation from Azerbaijan and relevant officers. During the visit, Chairman CDA and the Azerbaijani delegation reviewed the model of the "Assan Khidmat Markaz" in detail.While briefing on the progress of the construction activities of the "Assan Khidmat Markaz" the relevant officers informed that the center is being established in Islamabad with the cooperation of Azerbaijan's State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations. The primary objective of establishing the "Assan Khidmat Markaz" is to ensure the provision of various services and facilities to citizens under one roof.The briefing highlighted that work is being carried out 24/7 to complete the construction and repair work of the "Assan Khidmat Markaz" building, and the finishing and renovation work will be completed soon. It was further informed that latest technology will be utilized to develop the "Assan Khidmat Markaz" according to modern standards.Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized that timely completion of the project must be ensured alongside maintaining high quality. He said that the establishment of the "Assan Khidmat Markaz" will enable the citizens of Islamabad to access services and facilities from multiple departments at one place. Chairman CDA said that the establishment of the "Assan Khidmat Markaz" will contribute to the improvement of e-governance and service delivery by the Government of Pakistan.Azerbaijan delegation said that they are providing full cooperation and technical assistance for the construction and operationalization of the "Assan Khidmat Markaz". Chairman CDA said that this project will be a significant milestone in further strengthening relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan as well as in improving service delivery.

81% of Cigarette Packs in Retail Market Lack Tax Stamps, Survey Reveals

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

A newly released survey has revealed that a staggering 81.01% of cigarette brands available at retail outlets do not carry tax stamps, indicating widespread evasion of excise duties. Only 12.03% of the products were found to be tax-stamped, while 6.96% appeared in both taxed and untaxed forms, pointing to a parallel distribution network operating alongside compliant cigarette brands.The survey titled "The Unchecked Rise of Illicit Cigarettes in Pakistan," conducted by Stop Illegal Trade (SIT), an advisory forum for prevention of illicit trade in the country, has highlighted an alarming level of non-compliance with tax and tobacco control regulations across retail markets in the country. The findings point to a thriving black market and underscore the urgent need for stronger enforcement to curb illicit trade.The survey also found that nearly 47% of cigarette brands failed to display mandatory health warnings on their packaging, in direct violation of national tobacco control laws. With only 53.16% of brands complying, the widespread presence of unregulated cigarette brands continues to challenge enforcement mechanisms.Equally alarming is the frequent sale of cigarettes below the government-mandated minimum retail price of PKR 162.25. The availability of these underpriced products not only undermines legal businesses but also fuels consumption, particularly among price-sensitive consumers. Commenting on the findings, the spokesperson for SIT said, "The survey exposes the extent of tax evasion and regulatory weaknesses that are allowing illicit cigarettes to thrive.

foodpanda launches 'Breath of Care' initiative to safeguard riders during smog season

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

As Pakistan enters its seasonal period of heavy smog, foodpanda, the country's leading online delivery platform, has launched its "Breath of Care" initiative to distribute 8,000 Smog Safety Kits to its rider fleet across the country. The program reinforces foodpanda's ongoing commitment to rider health, safety, and wellbeing.Each Smog Safety Kit includes high-quality filtration masks, anti-smog glasses, anti-allergy medicine, honey lemon lozenges, Joshanda sachets, rose water, and skin protectant, along with reflective stickers to enhance visibility during low-light conditions. The kits are designed to offer both preventive and immediate relief against the effects of poor air quality.Ahsan Malik, Head of Logistics at foodpanda, stated, "Our riders are the absolute heroes of our platform, working tirelessly to ensure convenience reaches our customers, regardless of challenging weather conditions. As we enter the smog season, their safety and well-being become our absolute priority. Distributing these thousands of Smog Safety Kits is a tangible demonstration.

HBL to Launch UnionPay PayPak Co-Badge Debit Card

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

HBL, Pakistan's largest issuer of debit cards, has entered into a strategic partnership with UnionPay International and PayPak to launch the HBL UnionPay PayPak Co-Badge Debit Card. The card combines PayPak's domestic acceptance with UnionPay International's global reach, enabling customers to withdraw cash at ATMs and make purchases at POS terminals both locally and internationally.
This collaboration aligns with State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) vision to strengthen the domestic payments landscape and enhance the value proposition of PayPak, while deepening financial ties between Pakistan and China. The partnership was formalized at a signing ceremony in Karachi, attended by industry leaders, including Saleem Ullah, Deputy Governor – State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Muhammad Nassir Salim, President & CEO – HBL, Li Yong, Commercial Counsellor – Consulate General of the People's Republic.

Abdul Aleem Khan Dissatisfied With Ongoing Work On Lyari Expressway

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Federal Minister for Communications, Mr. Abdul Aleem Khan, has expressed deep concern and dissatisfaction over the current state of Karachi's infrastructure, saying it does not reflect the stature of Pakistan's economic hub. Mr. Abdul Aleem Khan said the ongoing work on the Lyari Expressway was unsatisfactory, and therefore, he has suspended Member South with immediate effect. "This is my promise to the people of Karachi that the Lyari Expressway will be transformed into a model infrastructure," he added. The Federal Minister announced that the development work on the M-6 Motorway (Sukkur–Hyderabad) and the M-10 Motorway (Hyderabad–Karachi Port) will commence from this financial year. He described these projects as a gift from the Federal Government to the people of Sindh. Mr. Abdul Aleem Khan said that with the completion of these motorways, the Karachi Port will be directly connected with the entire country, greatly improving trade, logistics, and connectivity.

COMSATS re-elected as member of ANSO Governing Board

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

4th ANSO General Assembly, held in Beijing on 30-31 October 2025, elected its Governing Board's Members. Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS), which was serving 2-year term as Member of the Governing Board since 2023, was re-elected. Other elected members of the Governing Board are from China, Chile, Egypt, Mongolia, Montenegro, Senegal, Serbia and Uzbekistan. COMSATS is ANSO's member since 2022. ANSO, the Alliance of National and International Science Organizations for the Belt and Road Regions, had 77 Members from 52 countries. During the 4th GA meeting, it admitted new members at the recommendation of the Governing Board, which raised the membership to 96 Scientific Institutes/Organizations.
The Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria participated in the 4th ANSO General Assembly and 10th meeting of ANSO Governing Board, during which he actively participated and rendered necessary advice. He gave inputs for ANSO's future development strategy and priorities as also in the context of emerging technologies during the course of discussions among the members. Appreciating ANSO's phenomenal growth and substantive activities, Amb. Zakaria committed to COMSATS' continued support and due role towards attaining the objectives that the two Scientific Organizations share. He reaffirmed COMSATS bringing its institutional experience, Network of Centres of Excellence, expertise and capabilities to jointly promote science, technology, innovation, and inclusive development across the Global South. Amb. Zakaria noted that COMSATS and BRI have 24 common Member States. Moreover, three of COMSATS' Centres of Excellence (NRC-Egypt, RSS-Jordan and TUBITAK-Turkiye) are also members of ANSO.

CPD/2025/T-156

BOP THE BANK OF PUNJAB

PROCUREMENT OF VARIOUS EQUIPMENT FOR THE BRANCHES OF THE BANK OF PUNJAB

1. Supply Installation of CCTV Camera
2. Supply of Cash Handling Machines
3. Supply of Steel Security Items
4. Supply Installation of Generators

Technical and financial bids on the "Single Stage-Two Envelope Bidding Process" are invited from well-reputed organizations/companies for the above items FY 2026 as per the following details: -

1. Bid documents are immediately available at E-Pads portal (https://punjab.eprocure.gov.pk/) and the PPRA website after this publication and may be obtained/downloaded free of cost.
2. Bids will be Uploaded/Submitted on E-Pads Portal only till **20-11-2025 (11:00 am)**. Technical Bids will be opened by a Committee on the same day i.e. **20-11-2025** at **11:30 am**, in the presence of bidders or their authorized representatives who wish to attend the bid opening process.
3. Financial Bids of only technically qualified bidders shall be opened on a date/time to be announced subsequently.
4. Bids shall be Uploaded/Submitted through E-Pads Portal only.
5. Prices must be quoted inclusive of all applicable taxes and delivery charges.
6. Valid NTN and GST Registration Certificates are required with the bids.
7. This Tender Notice is uploaded on website of PPRA (www.ppra.punjab.gov.pk), BOP (www.bop.com.pk) and E-Pads portal (https://punjab.eprocure.gov.pk/).
8. The Bank will not be responsible for any cost incurred in the submission of documents

Customers can file complaints via SBP's 'Sunwai' service at https://sunwai.sbp.org.pk.

Head Centralized Procurement
The Bank of Punjab
4th Floor, The Workplace, Main Boulevard,
Gulberg III, Lahore. Ph: 042-35773826, 35758108
Email:- procurement@bop.com.pk

PAKISTAN-AFGHAN BORDER CLOSURE DRIVES UP FRUIT, VEGETABLE PRICES IN LAHORE

- RETAILERS CONTINUE TO CHARGE ABOVE NOTIFIED PRICES; POULTRY STAYS STABLE AS EXPORTS PAUSED

PROFIT
NEWS DESK

TRADE disruption at Pakistan-Afghan border posts has continued to affect wholesale and retail markets in Lahore, driving up prices of imported fruits and vegetables while poultry rates largely held steady due to suspended outbound shipments.

Market data showed upward pressure on items sourced from across the border, particularly fruits, while several vegetables saw revised official rates that did not translate into relief at retail level. Vendors continued to sell above notified prices, with enforcement remaining weak.

Imported produce saw noticeable fluctuations. Onion prices rose by Rs40 per kg to Rs135-145 per kg officially but retailed at Rs150-180 per kg. Tomatoes, reduced on paper by Rs20 per kg to Rs150-165 per kg, were sold for Rs300-350 per kg.

Garlic and ginger prices varied across varieties. Local garlic was marked down to Rs190-200 per kg but retailed at Rs300 per kg, while Chinese garlic priced at Rs390-410 per kg officially was sold around Rs600 per kg. Thai ginger dropped to Rs520-550 per kg in the schedule but fetched Rs700-800 per kg in markets.

Among vegetables, potato soft-skin varieties increased to Rs90-95 per kg yet sold at Rs130-150 per kg. Spinach was set at Rs33-35 per kg but retailed at Rs50-70 per kg. Bitter gourd, cauliflower, and ladyfinger saw reductions in official rates but remained significantly higher in shops.

Fruit rates also reflected pressure. Apple prices rose by Rs5 per kg to Rs180-345 per kg officially and were available at Rs250-600 per kg, depending on quality. Bananas remained unchanged at Rs135-150 per dozen but were commonly sold for Rs120-180 per dozen.

On the other hand, live chicken prices were trimmed by Rs5 per kg to Rs284-298 per kg on official lists, although consumers reported no change at shops. Chicken meat was fixed at Rs432 per kg after a Rs7 cut but sold between Rs485 and Rs560 per kg, while boneless chicken ranged from Rs680 to Rs750 per kg.

Retailers continued to charge above notified prices during the week, while consumers reported limited field checks and compliance efforts by authorities.

PMD forecasts cold, wet spell across northern regions from Nov 4

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast a spell of rain, wind, and thunderstorms, along with snowfall over the mountains, in the upper parts of the country from November 4.

According to the PMD, a westerly weather system is expected to enter the upper regions on the night of November 3 and persist until November 5, bringing a marked drop in temperatures across northern and central Pakistan. Under the influence of this system, rain, windstorms, and thunderstorms with snowfall over mountains are likely in areas including Chitral, Swat, Dir, Kohistan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, and Malakand, as well as several districts of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

The PMD warned that isolated hailstorms and lightning could occur during the period, while strong winds may damage weak or temporary structures.

Rain and thunderstorms are also expected in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Murree, Sargodha, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Narowal, and Lahore on November 4. Daytime temperatures are forecast to fall significantly during the wet spell, followed by a further drop at night.

The department said fog and smog conditions in parts of Punjab may temporarily subside during the rains but could return afterwards.

Farmers have been advised to plan agricultural activities accordingly, and tourists have been urged to exercise caution while travelling to hilly areas due to the risk of slippery roads and reduced visibility.

For ongoing updates, the public can access alerts through the PMD's official website, mobile app "Pak Weather," and social media channels.

Three terrorists killed in separate operations across KP: ISPR

RAWALPINDI
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as three terrorists were killed in two separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Monday.

"Movement of a group of khwarij, opposite general area Esham, North Waziristan District, who were trying to infiltrate through Pakistan-Afghanistan border, was picked up by the security forces."

The military's media wing said troops effectively engaged the group of khwarij. "As a result of precise and skillful engagement, two khwarij belonging to the Indian proxy, Fitna al Khwarij were sent to hell."

In July, the government designated the banned terrorist outfit Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan as Fitna al Khawarij, mandating all institutions to use the term Khwariji (outcast) when referring to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on Pakistan. The ISPR added that one of the terrorists killed was identified as Qasim, and Afghan national who was serving in the Afghan Border Police.

In another intelligence-based operation (IBO) in KP's Tank district, security forces killed another terrorist, identified as Ikramuddin aka Abu Dajana, also an Afghan national. "These incidents reveal continued involvement of Afghan nationals in numerous terrorist activities against innocent civilians and security forces inside Pakistan."

"Pakistan has repeatedly been asking the Interim Afghan Government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border and is expected to fulfill its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by Khwarij and the involvement of its citizens in terrorism inside Pakistan," said the ISPR.

The statement added that the security forces of Pakistan remain "resolute and unwavering in their commitment to defend the nation's frontiers". A sanitisation operation was launched in the area to eliminate any "other Indian-sponsored Khwarji".

Last week, the deputy chief of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Amjad alias Mazahim, was killed in an IBO. According to ISPR, Amjad was a deputy to TTP chief Noor Wali Mehsud and headed the group's Rehbari Shura.

Mohsin Naqvi briefs Ch Shujaat on steps for internal security

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the residence of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam group (PML-Q) President and former premier Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain.

During the meeting, Mohsin Naqvi expressed his condolences to Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain over the passing of his brother-in-law, Javed Chattha, and offered heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family.

The interior minister also offered Fateha for the departed soul,

praying for eternal peace for the late Javed Chattha.

In addition to offering condolences, Mohsin Naqvi briefed Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain on recent developments concerning internal security and the government's ongoing measures to maintain law and order.

Ch Shujaat expressed satisfaction over the overall security situation and appreciated the Ministry of Interior's initiatives.

Both leaders paid tribute to the martyrs of the nation, acknowledging their sacrifices with deep respect and gratitude. Provincial Minister Chaudhry Shafay Hussain was also present on the occasion.

Sindh Rangers arrest key Khawarij militants in Karachi operation

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

Sindh Rangers have arrested three most wanted terrorists affiliated with the militant outfit Fitna al-Khawarij during an intelligence-based operation in Karachi's Manghopir Road, Kunwari Colony area.

According to a Rangers spokesperson, the arrested men were identified as Zaidullah alias Zaido, Noor Zada, and Hazrat Usman. The suspects were close associates of Khawarij leader Shams al-Qayyum alias Zawil alias Zafran.

During interrogation, the detainees reportedly confessed to providing phone numbers of local residents to Shams al-Qayyum, who then used the information to make extortion calls.

The Rangers said the suspects were also involved in extortion and land-grabbing activities. It was further disclosed that the brothers of Noor Zada and Hazrat Usman had previously been killed while working for the same militant network.

Officials added that Zaidullah alias Zaido was wanted by the Excise Korangi Police and the Anti-Narcotics Force in multiple criminal cases.

The suspects have been handed over to police for further investigation and legal action.

In-house change in AJK delayed due to PPP's pending nomination

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

The in-house change in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Assembly has been postponed due to delays in the Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) nomination of an alternative Leader of the House. This has led to repeated delays in submitting the no-confidence motion, sources reveal.

Despite claiming a numerical majority, the PPP has struggled to assert its position for more than a week and a half. Sources suggest that the no-confidence motion will only be moved after PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari returns to the country.

The delay is also connected to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) demand for early elections, which could limit PPP's ability to gain political advantage through in-house changes. The current assembly's term is set to end in July, and typically, two months before elections, development work is halted, and authority over appointments and transfers is withdrawn.

The PML-N is reportedly firm on holding elections in March, meaning that any new government would lose powers by January, two months before the vote. This would leave the PPP unable to achieve its political objectives in December and January. The party's insistence on completing the assembly's full term is said to be one of the key factors behind the deadlock.

Meanwhile, approximately 80% of AJK's development budget remains unspent, and around 2,000 recruitment positions, along with initiatives like health cards, could provide political leverage for a new government.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has claimed that PPP is in a strong position to form the government in AJK, as the sitting prime minister faces a no-confidence motion. The PPP had previously announced its intention to take over the government in AJK during a meeting chaired by former President Asif Ali Zardari. The party's Azad Kashmir Parliamentary Group also met in Islamabad to discuss the political situation.

Six police officers injured in attack on North Waziristan DPO's vehicle in Bannu

BANNU
STAFF REPORT

Six police officers were injured on Monday when gunmen opened fire on the vehicle of the North Waziristan District Police Officer (DPO) near Mamash Khel town in Bannu district, an official reported. Bannu Regional Police Officer (RPO) Sajjad Khan confirmed the incident, explaining that the attack took place on Miranshah Road, which connects Bannu and North Waziristan. "Armed men opened fire at the vehicle of North Waziristan's DPO," RPO Khan said, adding that the DPO himself was unharmed in the attack.

The injured police officers were transported to the Bannu District Headquarters Hospital for treatment. Meanwhile, the attackers, whose identities remain unknown, fled into nearby areas, prompting a search operation by local authorities to track them down.

This incident comes amid a growing wave of terrorism in Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, since the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) broke its ceasefire with the government in November 2022. The past few months have seen an uptick in attacks on law enforcement agencies, with police in KP increasingly targeted.

By-elections for two NA and one PA seat scheduled for Nov 23

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has announced the schedule for by-elections on two National Assembly (NA) and one Punjab Assembly (PA) seat. The by-polls for NA-66 (Wazirabad), NA-129 (Lahore), and PA-87 will now be held on November 23, after being postponed previously due to severe flooding in the respective areas.

The ECP has assured that all preparations are in place to ensure a smooth election process on the newly set date. Voters and local officials are advised to adhere to the official guidelines and stay updated with any further notifications from the commission.

Punjab government extends Section 144 restrictions until November 8

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

The Punjab government has decided to extend the enforcement of Section 144 across the province for another week, until November 8, according to a notification issued by the Punjab Home Department.

This extension follows a review of the latest threat assessments from law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Authorities have determined that maintaining these restrictions is necessary to prevent potential disturbances, sectarian tensions, and unlawful activities, ensuring public safety and protecting both public and private property.

As part of the extended order, the ban on public gatherings, processions, sit-ins, the carrying of weapons, the use of loudspeakers, and the distribution of provocative material remains in effect. Section 144 was initially imposed on October 8 for ten days and has now been extended three times in light of ongoing security concerns.

In a related development, the federal cabinet, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, has recently approved declaring Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) a proscribed organization under the Anti-Terrorism Act. This decision follows a detailed briefing by the Interior Ministry, which highlighted TLP's involvement in violent protests, incitement, and acts of terrorism since its formation in 2016.

LHC expresses dissatisfaction over Punjab govt's anti-smog efforts

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday expressed serious concern over rising air pollution and showed dissatisfaction with the Punjab government's anti-smog measures.

During the hearing of a set of petitions on environmental issues, Justice Shahid Kareem remarked that around 70% of Lahore's pollution is caused by transport, urging that instead of blaming others, "we must fix ourselves." The court ordered strict action against smoke-emitting vehicles and summoned the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore to appear in person.

Justice Kareem also questioned the effectiveness of anti-smog guns, asking what purpose they serve in the current situation.

The bench also expressed displeasure over the failure to enforce restaurant closing hours and demanded improved compliance with the court's earlier orders.

The toxic haze, a result of a combination of vehicle emissions, industrial pollutants, seasonal crop burning, and stagnant weather conditions, has shrouded these cities in thick smog, reducing visibility and causing widespread respiratory problems.

According to a global environmental website, Lahore on Monday ranked the most polluted city in the world with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 233.

Senior Punjab Minister Maryam Aurangzeb said the government continues strict action against the use of substandard fuel and garbage burning, adding that Lahore's AQI has now dropped below 350 due to coordinated policies and monitoring.

The authorities in Punjab have blamed the issue on air coming from India and other parts, which is affecting the air quality in various parts of the province.

The toxic haze has left much of Punjab and northern India shrouded for days, reducing visibility and triggering widespread health complaints such as throat irritation, coughing, and breathing difficulties.

Public health experts have advised residents to limit outdoor activities and wear protective masks when necessary.

The severe air quality coincides with the onset of winter, when cooler temperatures, stagnant winds, and emissions from vehicles, factories, and crop burning trap pollutants close to the ground across the plains of Punjab.

Every winter, a mix of low-grade fuel emissions from factories and vehicles, exacerbated by seasonal crop burn-off by farmers, blankets much of Punjab.

Breathing toxic air has catastrophic health consequences, with the WHO warning that strokes, heart disease, lung cancer, and respiratory diseases can be triggered by prolonged exposure.

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